Pendragon

Jubilee Anthology

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Selections from the ***Journal of the Pendragon Society*** *1965-2009*

Edited by Chris Lovegrove

The Pendragon Society

2010

In memory of Jess Foster, Kate Pollard, Bill Russell and Eddie Tooke

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Cover design by Nick and Christine Bristow for an issue in Volume VII, based on the Society badge's wyvern device (this being a two-legged winged dragon)

Editorial

"The original idea of forming some kind of Arthurian Society was mine, and I went to find Geoffrey Ashe, as the author of *King Arthur's Avalon*, to help me do it. With a group of people who were equally interested in Arthur and some kind of Dark Age project we launched The Pendragon Society *to stimulate interest in King Arthur and his contemporaries, and to investigate the historical and archaeological background of The Matter of Britain.*"

This was in 1959 in Winchester, as Jess Foster (1902-1979) herself wrote over ten years later. Half a dozen years later, following Mrs Foster's move to Bristol, it was decided to produce a quarterly magazine, and publication duly began in 1965, continuing with changes of format, editor, production and frequency until, in the Society's jubilee year of 2009, the last quarterly journal appeared. A final special issue was agreed, to be a retrospective "best of" compilation, and as current editor I was tasked with making a representative selection from nearly 45 years of journal contributions. What were my criteria in deciding this selection?

First, I tried to get a balance between the three strands of Pendragon studies which eventually evolved: history and archaeology; myth, legend and folklore; and literature, the arts and popular culture. Inevitably this was a tricky tightrope to walk, and I can't pretend I was more than moderately successful, but I hope that as reader you get a flavour of contemporary obsessions and prejudices, in the authentic language of the times. However, I have tried to keep to Arthurian themes and not wander into New Age and other more distant territories. Second, I attempted to include as many different contributors as possible. This was another headache, with almost irreconcilable parameters, and in the end it had to be down to the personal choice of the editor wearing as professional and dispassionate a hat (if you can imagine that) as possible. Third, to keep the options manageable I decided to exclude the following: artwork (other than a selection of journal covers), letters, fiction, poems, news, reviews and puzzles. This inevitably will be a disappointment to many, but to have included these categories would have necessitated a book-length compendium, and that was never the intention.

And finally, while there are early articles on the activities, particularly archaeological, of Society members, this is definitely not a history of the Society. Jess Foster's early essays on this subject – Till Hope Creates *and* A for Arthur *– detail her views of the first couple of decades of the Society's existence, but it will require a great deal of dedicated research and scholarship to produce a study examining Pendragon's changing role and activities over half a century, and that must be for another occasion and probably by another person.*

This issue is dedicated to the memory of individuals who breathed life into the Society but who are no longer with us; without their dedication and enthusiasm Pendragon may not have lasted even fifty years. The editor is also personally grateful to those members who have given significant help, tea and sympathy in recent years – Fred Stedman-Jones (chair and sometime editor), Simon and Anne Rouse, and Steve Sneyd – and of course all those contributors (scholars, artists, poets, storytellers, correspondents and reviewers) who over the years have enriched the pages of Pendragon *by providing both raw materials and works of exquisite craftsmanship. I hope this anthology stands as a testament to your generosity of spirit and insightfulness in promoting a broad view of Arthurian Studies.* ☙

Pendragon *Jess Foster*

• *Though uncredited this article by the Society's founder Jess Foster, the only piece in Volume 1 No 1 (no date but probably late 1965), marked the first issue of the Journal of the Pendragon Society. This number was in octavo, subsequent issues in quarto, foolscap, A4 and (in late 1977) A5.*

This is the first issue of *Pendragon* and it is hoped that many more will follow with your, our readers', interest and support. The Bristol branch of Pendragon was founded in July 1964 and now spreads from London to Southampton taking in the greater part of the West Country. Owing to the wide variety of projects undertaken during the year, interest and membership have increased steadily, so much so that we are now one of the registered organisations recognised by the Youth Committee of Bristol. The overall project caters for all tastes and hobbies ranging from, for the outdoor enthusiast, aerial photography, resistivity surveys, measuring and mapping of sites and leys, camping and hiking. For those whose interest lies elsewhere there is the job of looking through old records, books, etc., and noting points of interest.

Why all this?

We are trying to stimulate interest in the Historical Arthur of the Post-Roman-Pre-Saxon period known as the Dark Age. This involves searching for old battle-grounds, missing graves and monuments, reading manuscripts, studying name-places, ballads, etc., with a view to sorting fact from fiction, history from legend and romance. The ultimate intention is to write a guide book to Arthurian Britain and so fill in the missing gap in British history books. Later issues of this magazine will carry a variety of articles. This one gives only the background for the Quest but we hope you will find it useful.

Arthur of Britain

King Arthur of the Knights of the Round Table belongs not only to the Britons but to all English-speaking countries, and even to some continental ones. The names of his knights are familiar to us all – Tristan, Kai, Bedevere, Gawain, Lancelot, Gareth and Galahad, to name but a few – and we all know something, if only vaguely, of that romantic, "many-towered" capital that was called Camelot.

What we know of that other Arthur, the real historical Arthur of the 5th and 6th centuries, is another matter. The man who is now almost lost in the mists of time is said to have worn Roman chain-mail, carried a white-washed shield, probably had a string of amber beads round his neck, and charged into battle with a red dragon flying from the tip of his lance; not the figure of romantic legend we have come to believe in.

Yet this was the Arthur – a Roman-Briton aristocrat, born about 470 AD – around whom the Legends were woven later. This was the man who organized and led a great Resistance Movement that delayed the Saxon conquest by many long years and who gained a respite for his fellow-Britons so that, in due course, a Christian Kingdom could be founded; a Kingdom from which America and a great Commonwealth could grow.

How comes it that so little is known of this Arthur? This is only one of the many perplexing mysteries that surround that period known as The Dark Age. There is a good chance now, at long last, that this and many other conundrums will be solved within the

foreseeable future because, in Britain at least, a quest for the historical Arthur has begun.

If there are any who still do not believe that the famous Knights really existed, let them go to Cornwall and take a look at the time-battered monument that marks the grave of Tristan and carries a Latin inscription. If anyone can lay his hands on copies of those old medieval manuscripts known as *The Welsh Triads*, he will find there a story about three swineherds whose activities became involved with those of Arthur. He will read that: "The third was Trystan son of Tallwch, who guarded the swine of March son of Merchion while the swineherd had gone on a message to Essylt to bid her appoint a meeting with Trystan. Now Arthur and Marchell and Cai and Bedwyr undertook to go and make an attempt on him, but they proved unable to get so much as one porker either as a gift, or as a purchase, whether by fraud, by force, or by theft."

If this sounds very rustic one should remember that pigs bulked very large in the Celtic economy, and when one finds oneself part of a desperate Resistance Movement rations are hard to come by and have to be well guarded.

What was the setting for this life-and-death struggle?

For close on 400 years the island of Britain had been occupied and ruled by the Romans. The British had become used to them. Many Romans had settled in the country and married British woken. Romano-British boys joined the local Legionaries. Those who could afford to do so withdrew into the countryside, built themselves villas after the Roman fashion, settled down to agriculture and formed little self-contained communities, speaking Latin (quite probably with deplorable accents). Peace and prosperity reigned.

The suddenly all this was changed. The Romans withdrew, taking their Legions with them, and quite soon those peace-loving agriculturalists found themselves in trouble. Marauders from Ireland began to ravage the western coasts, Picts from the north cam raiding over the border. Worst of all, the terrifying longboats of the Saxons came sailing across the Channel loaded with ferocious warriors who massacred the land-owners, burnt down their farmsteads and carried off their stock.

The Britons sent messengers across the Channel with frantic pleas for help, but the Romans now had troubles of their own elsewhere. The Britons, untrained in self-defence, tried one desperate expedient after another. A pretender called Maximus was proclaimed Emperor for want of anyone better. He assembled an Expeditionary Force with which he restored something like law and order (though only temporarily) and then he took his Expeditionary Force across the Channel with the intention of conquering all Gaul and even of marching on Rome. He was killed outside the walls of the Eternal City and his Expeditionary Force melted away. It is thought that most of those who went with Maximus, and who survived the campaign, wandered back to Brittany and were the first to form a British settlement there.

Thus further depleted of their best fighting men the Britons tried to come to terms with the Saxons but the Saxons were not only pagan (while the British were, for the most part, at least nominally Christian) they were also barbarians driven by want and poor harvests in their own country to find land overseas, and therefore were in no mind to be placated.

It was when the Britons were threatened with total extermination that a young fellow

called Arthur summoned some of his compatriots and told them bluntly that they had better give up hoping for help from Rome and do something to help themselves.

It is probable that Arthur was one of those Romano-British boys whose father had trained with the Legions. Anyhow, he was a master of cavalry tactics. His lieutenants were Bedevere, Kai, Gawain and the others. They became a highly mobile force, followed by infantry for mopping-up exercises, and they put the fear of God into the invading Saxons.

It is true that the Saxons overran the country in the end, but that was many years later and by then circumstances had greatly changed. Twelve major battles had been fought and a desperately-needed respite had been gained. Those Saxons who remained clung only precariously to the coastlines in certain areas. These formed communities that gradually mixed and inter-married with the inhabitants. Missionaries from Rome had arrived and Christianised these communities. The Saxons became accepted and acceptable. Arthur himself was killed – according to tradition, by a traitor – and the Resistance melted away. An additional reason may have been just that the Britons could no longer breed heavy horses capable of carrying men in heavy armour.

The first Saxon to form a kingdom was Cerdic who landed at a spot near Southampton and, with his sons, established the kingdom of Wessex from which the future began to take shape. Modern research now suggests that this Cerdic was, in fact and like Arthur, half-British. While one of Arthur's parents had been Roman, it is thought now that only one of Cerdic's parents was Saxon, and that through his British parent he was probably descended from one of the oldest Celtic families in Britain. This is interesting since every king and queen who has ruled Britain since then has been descended from this same Cerdic.

If we now know so much what need is there for further information? Indeed, there is a great deal more to uncover and this is the reason for the present quest. In his book, *King Arthur's Avalon*, Geoffrey Ashe has this to say:--

"We have a beginning and an end, but Arthur's track in between is fragmentary. For most of the time we catch echoes of his footsteps and that is all. The salient point about the mass of Arthurian oddments is the grandiose geography. Nobody else except the Devil is renowned through so much of Britain. From Land's End to the Grampian foothills, Arthur's name 'cleaves to cairn and cromlech'. [...] Arthur seems to be everywhere."

There are still unsolved mysteries such as the grave mentioned by Nennius who was a reputable historian. Nennius writes of a grave that is sometimes ten feet long and sometimes six feet long, and always a different length at whatever time it is visited. This sounds nonsense, of course, but an ingenious theory has been put forward. Supposing that this grave – a hastily-dug one after the final battle of Camlann – were just a tiny island at the mouth of a river? The incoming tide would reduce the island to six feet, and the out-going tide might well lower the surrounding water till the grave was ten feet long. Maybe this island can still be located?

Delving into all the long-neglected literature such as *The Welsh Triads*, the *Gododdin* (which speaks of men in blue armour), the *Mabinogion* and the Songs of Taliesin and Aneirin, historians such as Geoffrey Ashe have been sifting out the facts. Now the time has

come when the facts must be substantiated by the work of the archaeologists.

If Arthur had a capital and stronghold in the West Country it must have been at Cadbury Castle in Somerset. It had been a particularly fine fort and refuge in times of trouble even long years before the Romans arrived in Britain. It rose high above the bogs and marshes that surround it, and this wet and soggy ground helped to make the fort almost impregnable. Traces of the stone facing of the ramparts are still visible in many places, and the levels suggest that part of the revetment may stand to a considerable height. Air photographs disclose the presence of numerous storage pits.

Many are the tales that surround it. The hill is said to be "hollow". There are two widely-separated wells on it. It is said that when the lid on one well is clanged shut the clang can be heard to echo in the other well. There are stories of ghostly hunting-horns sounding in the night, the clatter of horses' hooves down the rough pathway into the village. There is still a long Causeway that can be traced in parts across the adjoining fields that is marked, even on the Ordnance Survey maps, as Arthur's Hunting Causeway.

When the sun shines this is one of the most lush and fertile and beautiful parts of Somerset, the home of the cider-making industry. But when the clouds gather, and the winds howl, and the rain lashes against the trees that now rise above the ancient ramparts, one can easily believe any superstitious tale that is told. One can gaze up at the summit and feel sure that the ancient fortress carries a load of secrets.

A hint at some of those secrets came to light a few years ago when the hill was ploughed for planting potatoes. Many small scraps of pottery were picked up, and amongst them were small sherds of the sort that was imported to Britain from the Eastern Mediterranean area. Some of these small sherds suggest the presence of Christian missionaries, and Arthur, of course, was reputed to be a Christian.

The whole area covers 18 acres. If the necessary funds can be found to carry out an extensive dig we may well uncover a great deal more than just archaeological remains.

How did the legends come to be written? The most likely suggestion so far put forward is that after Arthur's death, when the Resistance died down, survivors of the long struggle probably drifted off the Wales and Cornwall, and some probably sent as far as Brittany to join the community of ex-soldiers already there. Maybe one of them sat down to write a long saga of the campaign. It could be that parts of this were recovered, long years later, by a wandering minstrel who realised that he had found himself a valuable meal ticket. Others took up the story. Geoffrey Ashe has written:

"Even if most of the stories were borrowed or fabricated, it is still necessary to explain why they should ever have been attached to Arthur. Even if the bards vested him with the attributes of a god, the question still remains: why him in particular?" To which there is no adequate answer but the readiest one – because he deserved it. ☙

Books to read

The Lantern Bearers by Rosemary Sutcliff
Sword at Sunset by Rosemary Sutcliff
King Arthur's Avalon by Geoffrey Ashe
From Caesar to Arthur by Geoffrey Ashe
The Long Sunset by R C Sherriff
The Legacy of Arthur's Chester by R Stoker
The Ancient Secret by Flavia Anderson

The Youth Group of the Pendragon Society *Alex Schlesinger*

• *The second issue listed the 1966-67 committee members – Geoffrey Ashe Esq FRSL (President), Terry Staples (Chairman), Alex Schlesinger (Hon Secretary), Francis Male (Hon Treasurer), Jess Foster, Dave Gorringe, A J Male, Michael ("Monty") Darling, Patrick Wyn-Jones and P L Male. In his editorial, Dave Gorringe wrote: "In this, the first edition for 1966 may I wish for all of us a rewarding year in return for the perseverance, in the face of, at times, bitter and cynical views from other people."*

The Youth Group was formed early in 1966 for administrative and other reasons. The actual formation of such a group had been contemplated for some time. The youth group contains all members of the Pendragon Society under the age of 21. A Committee was formed at the first meeting of the year, consisting of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer as well as two other Committee members. This newly formed branch will continue to work alongside the major part of the Society. There is to be no decrease in the responsibility of the younger members, as members of the youth group will still hold positions on the main committee. They will also be able to vote at meetings of the Pendragon Society.

In the past younger members have played a great part in the running of the Society. In fact when the Society was formed in Bristol in 1964, all the Members were under 21 except Mrs Foster (who was 22), Mr Male and our President Mr Ashe. Since that time many adults have joined the Society, though the younger Members have continued to play an important part in field work and administration. It was generally felt that this state of affairs might not last with a majority of adults, furthermore, as an ever increasing number of teenagers are becoming interested in archaeology and History the Society must hold some attraction for them.

The natural solution to these problems has been the formation of a Youth Group within the Society. Thus the future sees the two branches of the Society working together as before in our task of research into the Dark Ages, and the missing centuries of British history. ☙

Before the Dig *F J Male*

• *The third issue of Volume I, dated June 1966, was edited by Francis Male. This article gives the background to the first dig at Cadbury and indicates the role the Society played in those early days.*

The Pendragon Society was founded in 1959, in Hampshire, and we are still in communication with early members. In all 117 Pendragon badges are now in circulation and we hope that when the dig starts some of those members from whom we have not heard for some time will turn up at Cadbury.

It is just two years since the first tentative meetings of Pendragons began in Bristol. What have we been doing, and what have we achieved.

Cadbury is a long way beyond the reach of public transport so we have been dependent on the kindness of those members who have cars or vans to get us there. We have made many trips to the area and we ran a weekend camp there at Easter in 1965, when a force nine gale was blowing and the temperature almost down to freezing point.

In the course of these visits we have met a great many local people and everyone in the

district [from] far around now knows [of our] activities. Lord Castle Stewart, who owns much of the land across which the Hunting Causeway is said to run, gave us permission to carry out investigations and very kindly offered cooperation in any way we might require. We hoped that our aerial photographs would show traces of this lost causeway but in this instance they proved disappointing and we have not yet been able to follow up our investigations. We still have not given up hope of tracing this ancient trackway but there are so many bits of trackways noted in various books and reports that we fear this is going to be quite a task.

One member, Terry Staples, and his wife Brenda, went into the air to take a film of the ground between Cadbury and Glastonbury Tor. This film we are anxious to show to the archaeologists who are members of the Camelot Research Committee but an opportunity to do this has not yet occurred. We also hope to show it to the authorities at Bristol Museum. Not being experts ourselves we do not want to make statements about this film but there is certainly one field near Glastonbury that shows signs of small buildings close together and we are guessing that this may be the lost Medieval village that is said to have been somewhere in the vicinity.

Last year we divided the Pendragons into two sections – those over 21 and those under 21 – and after a deal of correspondence and form filling the junior section was registered as one of Bristol's official Youth Clubs. Having achieved this recognition we applied to the Youth Development Council for a grant that would enable us to acquire some sort of duplicating machine and/or some form of transport. The application was sent in with a very full description of our aims and intentions and it was submitted with the backing of the Bristol Youth Committee *and* the local Education authority. Though we specifically pointed out that there were places all over Britain with Arthurian associations, and that Pendragon Groups could and should be formed in all these areas, our request for a grant was turned down because "in order to be considered for a grant the scheme is expected to be of national significance or, if a local project, to have potentially much wider significance in that if successful, it could be repeated elsewhere" and apparently the Youth Development Council did not think we had the necessary qualifications.

The Camelot Research Committee decided that £350 would be the minimum sum for this year's exploratory dig. Since the dig is to be carried out by Mr Alcock of the University of South Wales, and partly for the instruction of the University students, the USW have contributed £150 towards this sum. Other bodies have promised sums varying from £25 to £75 but the total has been more than reached by a generous contribution given to the Pendragon by the *Western Daily Press* of £100 and a gift of £10 from Messrs Hodder and Stoughton (also to the Pendragon) through the kind offices of Rosemary Sutcliff, author of *Sword at Sunset*. Members will note, we hope with satisfaction, that the Pendragon has been instrumental in contributing a considerable sum to the dig.

We have taken note of the fact that the Bristol Museum now has a new showcase – containing, admittedly but not surprisingly, only four or five objects – labelled in large letters DARK AGE. We have also taken note of the fact that just recently a Summer School week-end has been held at the department of Extra-Mural Studies in Bristol with the title

"Archaeology in Western Britain 400–800 AD". Lectures were given by Dr Radford, Mr Leslie Alcock and Mrs Hawkes amongst others. The school was so fully attended that only one Pendragon member was able to get a ticket; she will be adding a short report either at our next meeting or, if available somewhere in this issue. Interest in the Dark Ages can be said to be increasing!

Twelve members from Bristol expect to be taking part in the dig. As the cost of accommodation is to be £6/15/0 per person we are about to run a Jumble Sale in order to raise enough money to subsidise these members. Mr Alcock has said that they will be working from 9 am (punctually) until 5.45 pm each day, regardless of weather conditions, so we feel that they should have their expenses defrayed if possible. Mr Alcock will repay 10/- per day to those who have already had experience of digging.

Some local members have been spending a lot of time in the reference libraries and have produced long lists of books, also long lists of places in the British Isles associated with Arthur. ☙

The Dig for Camelot *Jess Foster*

• *Volume 1 No 4 (August 1966) was a Special Edition to report on the first season of digging at South Cadbury. What the author didn't report was that she herself was the finder of the votive letter, causing mild consternation when she announced immediately afterwards "A for Arthur!" Subsequently this became the title of a Pendragon booklet, her informal history of the Society up to the early seventies.*

This must be a very quick interim report on the dig before everyone disperses for holidays. All those who saw the many TV programmes will have realized by now that the dig was successful beyond all expectations.

The most significant finds, of course, were the huge post-holes right on the summit of the fort. Until more ground is uncovered no one can say exactly how big the building was that those posts supported, but it must have been of considerable size, and the few sherds of Mediterranean pottery found there supplied the information that the chieftain who occupied this hill must have been a man of considerable wealth and importance.

Part of the rampart on the lower side which was uncovered proved to be 16ft wide with a newer wall, five feet wide, behind it; a formidable defence.

Apart from thousands of bits of pottery of all ages the following finds were made; three knives (two at least, of Dark Age period); a small pin, definitely Dark Age; part of a Roman cuirass buckle; two diamond-shaped 'plaques' (one gilt with a silver base) with holes for rivets; one votive letter A (Roman gilt, about 6 to 7 inches long). This letter find suggests the presence, already suspected, of a Roman temple.

All those who took part in the dig were housed at Chilton Cantelo School, a fine old house with gardens, swimming pool, tennis courts, a canteen bar and all amenities. Volunteers came from all over Britain and there were also two American students and a museum curator from Czechoslovakia.

Next year the sum of £5000 will be needed for the dig, and a great many more volunteers. Meanwhile, Mr Alcock has invited Pendragon members to meet him at Easter

at Cadbury to do some preliminary clearing of the ramparts and to investigate the neighbouring hilltops for outposts.

After the Press conference and the departure of all the Kings and Captains (including the TV vans *etc*) volunteers went back to Chilton Cantelo where Mr Alcock generously stood everyone a drink of champagne, and still more generously offered a toast to the Pendragon Society "whose initiative and enterprise got all this started"!

In October we hope to be able to give a big Party (for fund-raising) and friends from the dig have promised to attend if they possibly can (those from Cardiff crossing the Severn Bridge). We hope to receive shoals of letters from our members – from those who would like to come to the Party, if possible, and we can find beds for those who need them – and from those past members who would like to join us at Easter, not to mention those who want to put their names down *now* for the dig next year. Pendragons will be there in force next year in July. ☙

Front Page News *Jess Foster*

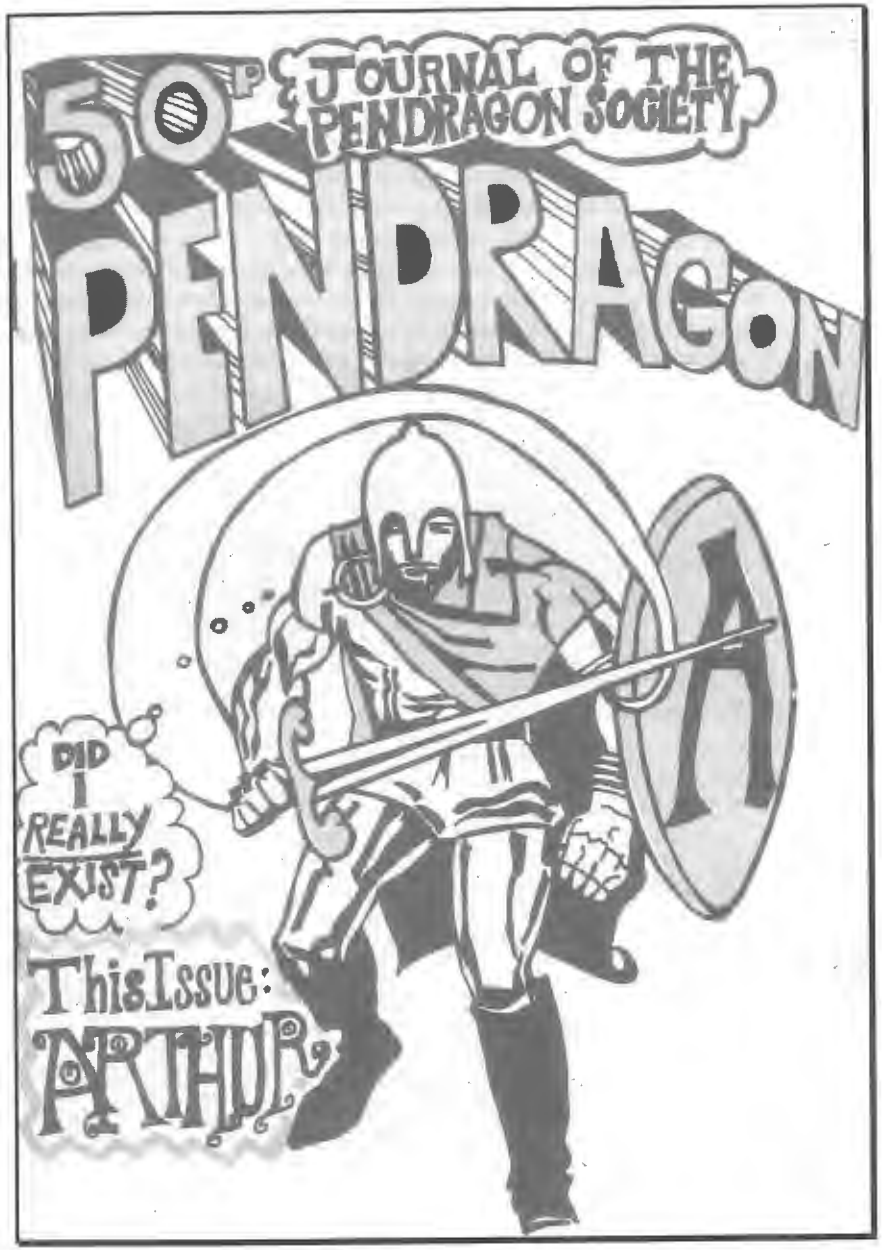
• *Volume II No 1 (February 1967) included this news of involvement in a BBC2 documentary, though subsequently the Pendragon contribution was largely edited out.*

Shortly after Christmas we were visited by Mr Parsons of BBC2 who is making a documentary film about Arthur, the dig and our project generally. For this purpose Mr Parsons has travelled all over Britain and he has interviewed everyone who is of consequence on the Arthurian circuit, including distinguished members of the Arthurian Society. The film will be shown on BBC2 on May 28th.

The Pendragon Society is to provide some present day action for this film by lighting a beacon on Cadbury on the evening of April 1st. A vast crowd of general public is not wanted but all members and some friends will be welcome, especially if they can come early in the day to help build the beacon.

It was hoped that we might be able to signal, by beacon, from Cadbury to Glastonbury Tor and from thence to Brent Knoll and Dinas Powys. For this purpose we carried out an exercise on February 11th. We lit a small fire and burnt flares at Cadbury and on the Tor. Observers went to Brent Knoll. The difficulty we found was that the whole area was twinkling with lights from cars and houses and it was not easy to distinguish small flares at a distance of 12 miles or more. Nevertheless the exercise was valuable. The flares were distinguished with some difficulty and it was obvious that in Dark Age times large beacons would be easily seen. The observers reported from Brent Knoll that the Welsh coast looked very clear and near. For the purpose of the film, however, it has been decided to light a beacon on Cadbury only as other beacons would not be picked out by the cameras.

During the Bath Festival a Dark Age Exhibition will be mounted at the pump Room. For this we are lending all our aerial and other photographs. The Bristol group has been reinforced recently by a contingent from the College of St Matthias and members of this group will be mounting the photographs for us. Meanwhile we look forward to meeting a lot of our members at Cadbury on the 1st of April. ☙



Kate Pollard's comic-book take for the cover of XIII/1 (Winter 1979) which celebrated the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Pendragon Society

Report from the Marquee *Michael Darling*

• Vol II No 3 (September 1967) began with an editorial thanking all involved in the ground-breaking summer season ("For six splendid weeks Cadbury was peopled by folks whose large and generous hearts ensured the success of the dig") and was followed by this report from Monty.

"The most swinging dig in Britain" is how some American paper is said to have described the Cadbury excavations this year. Perhaps the reporter got the idea from the far-flung telephone wires that were slung across the hilltop so that the Director could be kept in touch by Field Telephone with his widely-separated minions working on projects situated on different sections of the ramparts while he conducted operations on the summit.

Such an important dig was obviously going to stir public interest and for the benefit of the diggers, visitors and all concerned it seemed essential to provide a marquee which could be a Social Centre at all times and a place of refuge when storms and driving rain would be sure to assail us. Preparations were made accordingly. The Camelot Research Committee produced post cards depicting the finds of the previous year's dig, publicity leaflets and off-prints of Mr Alcock's report which had been published in the *Antiquaries Journal*. The Pendragon Society produced post cards from aerial photographs, soft drinks for the thirsty, a booklist of Arthurian literature normally available from public libraries, and samples of Celtic jewellery as souvenirs of a memorable pilgrimage to Camelot.

Over a period of three or four years a total of not less than £15,000 will be needed to carry on this investigation. This year £400 was spent on such things as buckets and spades alone including such items as trays *etc* which are needed for the proper collection of finds. Every volunteer was paying for his or her lodgings and only experienced diggers were given a rebate by the Director of 10/- per day. For those Pendragons who had volunteered to serve in the marquee no funds were available for any such rebate on expenses, nor for the heavy petrol bills that were inevitable, but it was hoped that sale of cards and jewellery would enable some recompense to be made to our salesmen and saleswomen.

The weeks prior to the start of the dig were spent busily sorting and mounting jewellery, making posters, collecting equipment and organising the ferrying to and fro of innumerable helpers and diggers so that a steady supply of both could be provided weekly throughout the six-week period. It was like a military operation.

Finally the great day arrived and a convoy of cars left Bristol to wend its way through the sleepy lanes of Somerset. Our Landrover, after a somewhat perilous ascent of the lane, was safely off-loaded at the top where we found that the marquee had been pitched already and that Dr Harte, friend and colleague of the Director, was already installed within in charge of a small exhibition of the previous year's finds. We set up our stalls – both for ourselves and for the Camelot Research Committee – and awaited the onslaught.

As it turned out the marquee, though costing £95, proved to be an excellent investment. Dr Harte and his team of Guides-Around-the-Site were always very welcoming and voluntary donations from visitors must, by the end of the dig, have produced a very considerable sum. Business at our end of the marquee was always brisk (except on occasions of really inclement weather), news, views and communications about

other projects were discussed and enjoyed, old friends re-united for a time. Signatures in the two Visitors' Books showed that people had come to us from all over the world and it was estimated that at least 5,000 visitors found their way to Cadbury this summer. ☙

Lung Mei: a British dragon line at Glastonbury *John Michell*

• *"John Michell arrived at Cadbury during the dig and interested us all in his project which is outlined here," wrote Jess Foster in her introduction to this article in II/3. John's first book* The Flying Saucer Vision *appeared in October from Sedgwick & Jackson, and both it and its successor* The View over Atlantis *became instant New Age bibles. This article was republished in the 1971 Glastonbury Fair special edition, which was also published as* The Pendragon Anthology *by Pendragon House, run by Canadian member John Badger.*

To men of the 18th century, such as Dr Stukeley the great antiquarian and Arch Druid, Britain was the holy land, the place of vision containing the vessel of enlightenment, the Holy Grail. As Blake said, "All things begin and end in Albion's Ancient Druid Rocky Shore." Somewhere enfolded in the landscape itself lay the key to mysteries known in the past and destined to be revealed in the future. Stukeley was the first to see the ancient monuments of Britain not only individually but as part of a great pattern, truly meaningful only when viewed panoramically as a whole. Etched into the very face of the country could be found a system of signs and symbols revealing to its initiates the true spirit of the past and the path to the future.

Those who rely on the arbitrary values of modern science with its disregard for the purpose of knowledge and of true wisdom have naturally rejected the belief that a great tradition has been preserved for our use to-day, or that any native alchemical science ever existed of the sort that has been preserved more openly in the East. And it has been fashionable to belittle its last guardians the Druids who inherited their knowledge of the holy places and centres of lines of power in the country from their predecessors, the great native astronomers, who divided the country according to the laws of geomancy and laid out instruments of precision such as the wonderful stone computer, Stonehenge.

The recent revelations by Hawkins and Hoyle of the true meaning and barely conceivable delicacy of this monument should now have opened our eyes to something of the mystery contained within the landscape, the secrets towards which the scholars of the 18th century were groping before the rise of myopic sciences such as that of modern archaeology. Recently several clues have come to light. The first is the discovery of the British dragon lines, called by the Chinese Lung Mei.

The Chinese knew the dragon as a bright light moving across the night sky, the same phenomenon as gives rise to the legend of the flying saucers to-day. They regarded the dragon as a benevolent power, the spirit of life, the source of all good. The Lung Mei, the lines along which it was seen to move, were mapped out and so revered that the land along their courses was reserved for the exclusive use of the Imperial Family. Even at the beginning of this century no one else might live or be buried along these lines.

The charting of the sites in Britain connected with the dragon legend, the hills or

mounds said to be the place of a killing or of the appearance of a dragon, has revealed that at least three Lung Mei run across the face of this country, linking up most of these sites with three straight lines. One such line runs from Farne Island off the tip of Northumberland and passes just east of Taunton. The other, intersecting it at Longwitten in Northumberland, runs from east of Linton in Roxburghshire to St Osyth's in Essex, leaving England at Pegwell Bay, the scene of Dyce's great visionary picture in the Tate. A third, the most clearly identifiable of these lines, passes over Glastonbury Tor on its way from St Michael's Mount in Cornwall to the coast on the borders of Norfolk and Suffolk.

The cult of the dragon that flourished along that line is remembered in the numerous St Michael and St George dedications of the churches along its route, built on the high places which marked its route, for those saints were chosen by the Christian Church to confirm the suppression of the dragon cult which preceded it. North Brentor, Burrow Bridge Mump, the Tor and Silbury Hill are some of the siting points on its way, and its direction can be checked at certain centres of alignment such as the aptly named Eye in Suffolk where the relative positions of mound, church and abbey point its course.

Glastonbury, the prime centre of the cult of the dragon and of the pre-Christian astronomical religion as well as, by an adaptation of its legend, of the Christian Church itself, was the place from which the line was chiefly assessed. Like the great hill outside Peking from which every year the Emperor renewed the sacred alignments, the Tor may have been surround by an astronomical garden, a feature which one might see in the Zodiacal Giants, first defined on paper by Mrs Maltwood and refined by the great contemporary geomancer Ken Knight.

The dragon line itself follows exactly the alignment of the ridge of the Tor. Two stone pillars, erected one on the summit and one on the lower peak towards the western end of the ridge and just visible from the base of the present tower, gave the line of the great dragon of southern England. Its rediscovery and our progress towards fuller knowledge of its implications mark a stage towards the ending of the Enchantment of Britain, the achievement of the Grail, the re-invocation of King Arthur, the sleeping king who will awaken to restore the true spirit of Britain. ☙

Stirrup Cup *Patrick Wynne-Jones*

• *Patrick's report in II/4 (Summer 1968) is typical of the frisson felt of frontiers being extended.*

A challenge to the idea of Arthur as a leader of cavalry and startling evidence that the defences of Cadbury are unique among those of Dark Age Forts in the British Isles – these were just two of the surprises in store for Pendragon Members who heard the Talk given by David Evans of Cardiff University at our meeting on March 12th [1968].

"Dai", as he is known to his many friends among the Pendragons, made a trip from Cardiff to address the Society. He began his Talk by contrasting the large area and daunting defences of Cadbury with the smaller size and less impressive fortifications of such other Dark Age sites as Dalmahoy and Dunadd in Scotland or Lagore and Garranes in Ireland. Then, drawing on evidence unearthed in the 1967 dig, he explained that the

construction of the main rampart at Cadbury and, in particular, the wooden palisade reinforced with horizontal beams featured in this year's [Camelot Research Committee] publicity material, is non-Roman in style and has it closest parallels in North African, Byzantine, models. Apart from mention of the Mediterranean connection already established by pottery finds and the possibility of importing foreign workmen, Dai did not attempt a detailed theory to fit the new evidence but left his audience to speculate on a possible explanation.

A further surprise came with Dai's attack on the idea of Arthur as a cavalry leader and fighter. In this attack he questioned Professor Collingwood's suggestion that the geographical spread of Arthur's battles, and the successive defeats suffered by the Saxon infantry, are explained by Arthur's role as a leader of a cavalry force. Basing his argument on the contention that hand-to-hand fighting on horseback only really became possible with the introduction of stirrups by the Vikings, Dai put forward the counter-theory that Arthur led a troop of "Dragoons": highly mobile infantry manoeuvring on horseback but fighting on foot.

Wherever possible Dai illustrated his Talk with colour slides lent by the Cardiff Department of Archaeology. These included several close studies of the Sutton Hoo helmet-mask and other pieces whose elaborate decoration supported the theory that much of the armour found at that site is "parade" rather than "fighting" type.

However, no slides could solve the problem of Arthur as "Dragoon" or Cavalryman. In the intense controversy which arose on that point many examples from Roman and Byzantine history were put forward as evidence of early fighting on horseback and the use of stirrups before the arrival of Vikings. The controversy still rages. Can any Pendragon member supply the facts to resolve it? ☙

Badges and other gear *Jess Foster*

• *Questions of identification and image were the subject of this editorial note in III/4 (May 1969).*

The Pendragon Society was founded in Winchester by Geoffrey Ashe and a group of adults interested in Dark Age research. The first Task Force, however, consisted chiefly of children and teenagers drawn from neighbouring villages. We roamed the South Downs hopefully in search of evergreen monuments, lost graves and forgotten battlefields. Sometimes we went on coach tours to places such as Glastonbury, and to visit museums where there were understanding archaeologists such as kind young Mr Worsley at the Hazlemere museum. Whenever we roamed abroad our party seemed to swell in numbers in a surprising way.

This was excellent, but we foresaw difficulties. We had a suspicion that not all our fellow-travellers would be welcomed by serious archaeologists if, and when, we ever succeeded in getting an important dig started – as, for instance at Cadbury.

It was agreed that we should acquire a badge for purposes of quick identification. We would hold ourselves responsible only for bona fide badge-wearing members who materialised unexpectedly on a site. Nowadays, of course, Pendragons who meet for the first time at Cadbury can introduce themselves quickly.

It was the young who wanted the badge to be a golden dragon on a blue background because the Society started at Winchester, and it was, according to legend, over Winchester that the "dragon" (comet?) appeared when Ambrosius lay dying. He had drunk water from a well that had been poisoned by a Saxon terrorist. The appearance of this dragon so terrified the citizens (who, at that time, were known as Dragons themselves) that they called on Merlin to explain the portent to them.

Merlin foretold that Ambrosius would die, that Uther would lead the army against the Saxons, and that one day Uther would have a very potent young son who would rule over all those areas where the dragon had been seen (Wales, the West Country and Brittany).

Ambrosius did die; Uther took command of the army and was given the title of Pendragon – leader of the Dragons. He caused two golden dragons to be cast: one he took with him to the wars, the other he bequeathed to the citizens of Winchester. The badge chosen by the youngsters was supposed to represent the golden dragon in the blue sky.

It has now been suggested that we should have a distinctive tie – presumably a blue one with a golden dragon in evidence. This would be admirable for men. Would anyone care to suggest what kind of headscarf or other useful accessory might be acceptable to the ladies? ☙

The Yarlington Dig *by a Volunteer*

• *The writer of this report in V/1 (October 1970) was anonymous, but may well have been Peter Damsburg, who was mentioned in a note at the foot of the article. This Somerset site, dug first by the Society and then by the short-lived shoestring organisation Group Archaeology, is also known as Cattle Hill (from the adjacent road) and as Bratton Seymour (from the nearest town). The settlement, possibly a Roman* mansio, *was on an old track called the Hardway which led past Cadbury Castle – then in its last season of digging.*

This will not be a detailed report; Terry Staples will no doubt be writing one in the near future. I was merely a volunteer and would like to tell those who were unable to come along, but are interested in the dig, what we found.

Until this summer only a small part of the Roman building had been uncovered. This had been started by local people and had been extended by us in the pattern of a number of squares. This summer two large areas of turf, both equal in size to the area covered by the previous squares, was taken off. Our main objective was to discover as many walls as possible, and this I am pleased to say was entirely successful, even though there were a very limited number of volunteers.

A number of rooms were discovered which greatly increases the plan of the building. An area of paving was uncovered in one section, and a large amount of roofing slates in another. An interesting discovery was a length of herring-bone walling in another area which could have been built into the wall as decoration. At one point we thought we had uncovered a passage, but as digging progressed it was found that this was a division between two buildings, and it is thought that there could be three or more buildings on the site.

This is all very interesting, but whenever I am asked "What did you find?" and answer

"Walls", people do not look very enthusiastic. But of course we found many other things.

Over twenty coins were found, bringing the present total to well over fifty, ages of these being around 350 AD. Many pieces of pottery were found, black coarse pot, Samian, and other kinds, some pieces being quite large and decorated. We also found bone pins and some bronze jewellery, also some pieces of glass but these may not be Roman. Whilst digging a rubbish pit evidence of a Roman road was uncovered, running parallel to the Roman buildings.

Altogether it was a very satisfying dig, and the amount of work accomplished by a very limited number of people was quite astonishing.

I must also mention that we had hundreds of visitors, most of whom contributed small donations which helped to pay some of the expenses of the dig. Thanks should also be given to Mr [Frank] Woodhead who showed the visitors round. ☙

The Worthy Farm Festival *Jess Foster*

• *This notice in the May 1971 issue (V/3) featured the event now known worldwide as Glasto…*

Any Pendragon members or friends who are going to this Festival during the week of the Midsummer solstice are invited to call at the Pendragon tent where we shall be distributing leaflets and selling bumper copies of our magazine, properly printed [*Pendragon Glastonbury Fair edition*]. The tent will be gaily decorated with symbolic posters and should be readily identifiable on account of the windsock Pendragon standard that will be flying from it – if this can be successfully contrived!

There will be no gates, fences or entrance fees: the organisers have no intention of making it a commercial venture. They have been living at the farm for a considerable time, and their intention is to build the festival into an annual event in the manner of a medieval Fair.

Behind the farm there is a wide dip between the hills and the Fair will be held there. The organisers have told us that they hope to build a scale model of Stonehenge in the centre of this dip with a scale model of the Great Pyramid over it. One side of the Pyramid will be let down to reveal the inner circles and to form a platform for performances. It seems unnecessary to add that there will also be a certain amount of Pop music.

We wish the Festival every success and we hope we shall meet old friends there as well as new ones. The site is not far from Cadbury. ☙

A Guide to recent Arthurian fiction *Chris Lovegrove*

• *The present editor's look at children's and adult literature of interest to Pendragon bookworms in VI/3 (Summer 1972)*

A little while ago the Society published an *Arthurian Book List* which was a selection of Arthurian literature then generally available. The non-fiction list has been supplemented amply from time to time in the magazine, but perhaps more mention should be made of titles in the fiction field, both adult and junior, which still continue to appear. The following list is, however, both selective and subjective, and we would like to hear from

members of titles they think deserve to be mentioned. Most are available in paperback and we begin with junior books.

First, a series of novels by Alan Garner whose first book *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen: a Tale of Alderley* (Collins 1960, Puffin) centres around a hollow hill in Cheshire with a sleeping king (never named) and his knights; its substance encompasses the mystery of European folk-lore and mythology. The sequel, *The Moon of Gomrath* (Collins 1963, Puffin), acknowledges debts to *The White Goddess* and *The Old Straight Track*, as well as traditional material such as the Wild Hunt. *Elidor* (Collins 1965, Puffin) is a modern-day Grail story with its Fool and its four treasures – cup, stone, sword and spear – but of course there is more to it than that. *The Owl Service* (Collins, Peacock) also is more than just a re-telling of the Mabinogion story of *Math, Son of Mathonwy*.

Another tale concerning a sleeping king is recounted in *Earthfasts* by William Mayne (Hamilton 1966, Puffin), where Arthur is mentioned by name and localised in the Yorkshire dales: while *Over Sea, Under Stone* by Susan Cooper (Cape 1965, Puffin) is a detective tale of the Grail set in present-day Cornwall with a re-incarnated Merlin and a gaggle of archaeologists at the end. Penelope Lively, another children's writer, deals with an Arthurian theme in *The Whispering Knights* (Heinemann 1971); and in *The Wild Hunt of Hagworthy* (1972) localises her story in Somerset, basing it on a [Women's Institute] member's mention of the Hunt in Stogumber.

While most of these titles deal with what might be loosely called the 'supernatural' for want of a better word, Rosemary Sutcliff's latest children's book, *Tristan and Iseult* (1972) evokes a very strong Celtic atmosphere in her stylistic re-handling of the old theme, so much so that one could almost believe it is the original prototype pre-dating the medieval versions. It impresses more than Anna Taylor's *Drustan the Wanderer* (Longman 1971) which tends more to the standard fault of historical novels, that of costume drama; this is apparent, too, in *The Emperor Arthur* by Godfrey Turton (W H Allen 1968), a pastiche of Ashe and Malory among others, written in a poor prose style.

Mention should be made perhaps of Henry Treece's *The Green Man* (The Bodley Head 1966, Sphere) which presents a different view of Arthurian Britain – and Denmark – than that of his children's books; and of *All or Nothing* (Macdonald 1960) by John Cowper Powys, better known for his *A Glastonbury Romance* – this fantasy about the forces tending towards either creation or destruction is set "near to the Chesil Beach and not far from the grave of King Arthur at Glastonbury, at Cad Castle in the county of Foghorn," and is a suitable antidote if your head is spinning over the various versions of the historical Arthur.

The Stanzas of the Graves *R D Webster and Gwenan Evans*

The "Stanzas of the Graves" are to be found in *The Black Book of Carmarthen*, one of the major early Welsh texts. They tell, in a very cryptic manner, the whereabouts of the dead British heroes who fought against the Saxons, and tell the characters of these heroes. They are sometimes not very complimentary. For instance, Llew Llaw Gyffaes (one of the three major figures in the legend behind Alan Garner's *The Owl Service*) was, according to the Stanzas, "a man that never gave the truth to any man". More often than not, however, they

tell of the prowess, and sometimes cruelty, of the heroes. A good example of this was Gwthwch who, we are assured, "was vehement in the conflict" and "while he would kill three, he would at the laugh" – clearly a man who enjoyed his work!

However, some of the stanzas are not so straightforward. Some seem to be riddles, often quite complex formulas which, when worked out, may place an important grave much more precisely than the stanza would at first seem to indicate. For instance, Stanza V tells us "The grave of Ceri Gledyvhir is in the region of Hen Eglwys, in a rugged steep place: Tarw Torment in the enclosure of Corbre." Let us analyse the elements of this statement. Firstly Hen Eglwys: this means old church. Another word for church is *Llan*; moreover *Llan* means enclosure or henge. "In a rugged steep place" would seem (from experience) to be a fair description of any given part of Wales but Tarw Torment is a little more specific.

Near the Usk Reservoir, just outside the 'Zodiac Area', we find a stream, the Nant Tarw, which, quite apart from its appearance in the Stanzas, is interesting because it means 'stream' (*nant*) of the Bull (*tarw*). Moreover, a matter of a few yards from the Tarw lie two stone circles or henges, the old church referred to in the stanza, and between the circles and the stream we find a large cairn. Thus it seems we might have found the grave of Ceri Gledyvhir close by the Pumpsaint Zodiac.

This led us to believe that we might look further at the Stanzas with regard to the places in or near the Zodiac Circle. This is a lengthy and arduous task which involves highly circuitous translations in and out of Welsh, a good deal of map work and an intimate knowledge of Welsh folklore. The work, therefore, stretches well into the future but we do have one or two other examples.

Stanza XXXIV informs us that the grave of Eiddiwlch the Tall is in the upland of Pen Nant Twrch. Pen Nant means the head, or source of the Twrch stream. Blaen Twrch is a place in the north east corner of the Zodiac area. Moreover, at Blaen Twrch there is a standing stone. Perhaps Eiddiwlch the Tall lies here. But our interest in the Twrch does not end there.

We have called this the 'Wild Boar' issue of *Pendragon* due mainly to the importance of the legend of Arthur and his men hunting the wild boar all over the country. It is interesting here to note that overlooking the Cwm Twrch (Valley of the Boar) wherein runs the [Twrch] stream we find Waun Cynydd, the moor of the huntsman. Thus the area is obviously well endowed as a part of this widespread legend. This is borne our by the fact that near Llandovery, which lies just outside the south western corner of the Zodiac, there is a hill and close by it a small village. The hill is called Pen Arthur (Arthur's hill) and the village, Gwynfe, a contraction of Gwynafahyr (Guinevere).

By no means all the graves mentioned in the Stanzas lie within the Zodiac area. For instance, the grave of Setthenin, the weak-minded, is between Caer Cenedin and the shore. This is a reference to the destruction of the semi-maritime settlement of Cantre'r Gwaelod. Setthenin, so runs the story, was guarding the walls of Cantre'r Gwaelod ready to shut the dyke gates when the tide came in, whilst in the settlement itself a great feast was under way. Setthenin was quite naturally tempted to partake of a little light refreshment to relieve the tedium of his watch. Unfortunately, he became very drunk and forgot to close

the gates against the sea. So it was that Cantre'r Gwaelod disappeared beneath the waves where it lies to this day just off the coast near Aberdyfi (Aberdovey).

There is clearly a great deal of work left to do on these stanzas for there are, no doubt, many mysteries concealed in their cryptic phrases. Perhaps the one most immediate and relevant to this Society is Stanza XLIV which says:

"The Grave of March, the Grave of Gwythur,
The Grave of Gwgawn Gleddyrswdd.
A Mystery to the World, the Grave of Arthur."

• *Printed in the 'Wild Boar' issue (VI/4 November 1972), this article was one of many that emerged from the so-called 'expedition to Wales' when some Pendragons and members of RILKO (the Research into Lost Knowledge Organisation) spent a week that summer in Carmarthenshire "investigating standing stones and circles, seeking lost graves, tracing the power points of the Pumpsaint Zodiac" and meeting with the late Professor E G Bowen, who talked on Arthurian connections with the county.*

"The Deeper Significance of Heraldry and Chivalry" *Julie Weaver*

• *A report (VII/1 Easter 1973) on a lecture given at the University of Bristol in February 1973 by Sir George Trevelyan, "grandfather of the New Age movement", who, as well as being nephew of the historian G M Trevelyan, claimed he was related to Sir Trevillian, one of King Arthur's knights.*

Our guest speaker began his fascinating lecture by explaining the language of heraldry by means of which armorial bearings can be described fully yet concisely. The shield consists of a *field* (background), the *ordinary* (a simple geometric shape such as a chevron) and the *charge* (a special decoration, often a pun on the owner's name such as three fir cones for the Pine family). Colours are primary and retain their old French names – *gules* (red), *or* (gold) *etc.* These shields made knights immediately recognizable in battle or in tournament.

What is the "Deeper Significance of Heraldry"? Heraldry developed in the early Middle Ages – a time of great mysticism. In the full "achievement" of a noble family as displayed in castle or chapel we see the shield crowned by the *helm* and *mantling* (originally a linen surcoat, later transformed into stylized plant forms), above the *motto*, the whole supported by *beasts* such as lion and unicorn. Sir George explained their significance as respectively higher thought, the aetheric body, aspiration and spiritual guides.

Chivalry was essentially Christian, but pre-Christian symbols are evident too – the colours have astronomical meanings (*gules* Mars, *argent* Moon) and King Arthur's twelve knights can be seen as symbols of the zodiac.

The age of knights in armour has passed, together with the British Empire, the product of wars. We are now entering the Age of Michael and Aquarius whose characteristic will be the coming together of all mankind in brotherhood, irrespective of class. Great interest is once again being taken in mysticism and occult subjects. In our essentially barbaric times, heraldry has an important role to play in proclaiming the ideals and aspirations of a new Golden Age.

Some legends of Merlin *Enid Griffiths*

• *The late Enid Griffiths lived in the Gower peninsula near Swansea, and as the Society was shortly to be investigating the archaeology of Llanelen Mrs Griffiths was asked for information on local legends for VII/2 (July 1973).*

Near the hospital in the ancient town of Carmarthen there stood, until two years ago, an ancient stump of oak tree concreted into place and bearing a brass plate stating that Merlin had been imprisoned in this tree. Road widening made it necessary for the stump to be removed which caused a great deal of controversy and a hurried archaeological dig.

The controversy arose because of an old prophecy which stated that when a calf ran up a steeple and Merlin's tree fell then Carmarthen would sink. Many years ago a calf did climb up the tower of St Peter's church, and following a slight earthquake part of the town did subside near the estuary. Naturally the people objected to their well-preserved tree being moved.

There is a cave outside Carmarthen which is still known as Merlin's cave.

At Pennard on the south side of the Gower Peninsula, on the opposite side of the Towy Estuary on which Carmarthen stands (before the widening of the Estuary which followed the earthquake and the subsequent silting up of the same) there must have been a land connection between Pennard and Carmarthen. Legend has it that the present ruin of Pennard Castle stands on a much older foundation where King Arthur's half-sister, Morganwy le Fey, lived. Merlin had married Vivienne, a friend of Morganwy, who, having been trained by Merlin actually excelled him in occult knowledge.

The local story is that Vivienne imprisoned Merlin in the old tree and went off to visit her friend Morganwy. After getting up to some more mischief they destroyed the castle overnight by invisible means. Vivienne's fate is not known.

At Pembrey-Burryport, higher up the Loughor Estuary, is a much older legend. Until about 1900 there stood "the famous standing stones of Pembrey", more famous than those of Stonehenge, of which, unfortunately, only one remains to-day. A colliery owner used the almost complete circle to prop up the slope or slant, as it was called. Here, above the circle, is an old tumulus, also an old manor farm called Llettyruchan, built over the foundations of what was once Gwyn ap Nudd's palace or headquarters. Merlin is supposed to have visited Gwyn with Arthur and although Gwyn was known to be thousands of years old he had the appearance of a radiant youth. Merlin is reported to have said of him, "He is a very strange Being indeed."

There is, of course, Arthur's Stone with the hole in it from which he is reputed to have drawn the sword. This is near Reynoldston, a pretty Gower village with its quite noted King Arthur's Hotel. It is recorded that Arthur used to visit Gower for supplies of horses of which there are still many roaming wild over the Common at Fairwood. Some still show distinct Arabic strains.

From his headquarters at Llettyruchan Gwyn was supposed to ferry the soulds of the dead by an underground stream to the Tor in Glastonbury. He was known as King of the Fairies, or Hollow Hills, and King of the Underworld. He rode with the hounds of Annwn

and was credited with having created a race of soul-less little dark people possessing an atavistic type of clairvoyance in an area still known as Achddhw. Because Arthur, in one of his battles, ordered that the body of one of these little people should be sent back to her own for burial, instead of being buried in a common grave with the soldiers, the Head of the Little People pledged that they should always serve Arthur, giving him warning of the whereabouts of his enemies, *etc.* ☙

"Hollow Hill" *Jess Foster*

• *This extract is from Jess's editorial to VII/4 (March 1974). The Society was unable to encourage any further interest at the time into Colin Bristow's initial findings, though IX/3 (May 1976) Jess reported that Bristol University's Department of Physics had "kindly allowed the Society the use of a piece of equipment called a Tellohm. This is essentially a device for measuring the resistivity of the ground – air-filled cavities will show up as anomalies in the normal readings obtained." After one sortie nothing further was reported.*

Before the famous Camelot Research Committee came into being we, the Pendragons, visited Cadbury a great many times and did our best to gather information and ideas from people who lived locally. On one occasion we met a villager who, years previously, had been out on the hill catching rabbits. While digging out a ferret he had almost fallen down a tremendous hole that had opened unexpectedly beneath him and which he had, subsequently, filled in again. On a later occasion we met three men who told us that though now lived elsewhere they had, as children, played in a large cave right on the summit of the hill. The rabbit-catcher and these men agreed absolutely on the exact spot where his cave/cavity had been. We promised that when the time for the dig came we would persuade the archaeologists to excavate this spot.

In fact, as everyone knows, six summers of digging went by and his promise was never kept. We need not now go into the reasons for this. However, about eighteen months ago one of our Bristol members put us in touch with his brother who is a geophysicist, and whose business it is to investigate subterranean phenomena, chiefly on behalf of mining communities, in many parts of the world but chiefly in Cornwall. Our geophysicist, Mr Colin Bristow, was invited to Cadbury where he carried out some exploratory tests. With the aid of powerful and sophisticated instruments he established the fact that there are several underground tunnels (possibly man-made) at the spot indicated to us. [...]

Colin Bristow comes sometimes from Cornwall to lecture at Bristol University. Members of the Geophysical Department there have offered him any additional help he may need when the time comes to carry out a major survey. We have written to Professor Leslie Alcock, who is now at Glasgow University, in the hope that he will be able to spare time to come south and take part in the project. We shall be making arrangements to hold an open lecture at Bristol University when Colin will explain to all those concerned all the various methods by which he will test the old tradition that Cadbury is a "Hollow Hill".

☙❧

The New Camelot *John Brooke*

• *Jess Foster's editorial to VIII/4 (July 1975) noted that articles printed in the magazine "do not always meet with the whole-hearted approval of all members, nor do they necessarily represent the total thinking of the Society. Some members are unrepentantly sceptical about all zodiacs. Some sink mentally to ocean depth at the mention of symbols. Some achieve almost instant slumber at the mere hint of history; others suddenly remember urgent appointments when some archaeological topic arises. Yet each and every member is zealously enthusiastic about his or her own particular quest." John Brooke's essay may be one such quest; a frequent contributor to the Journal in the 70s (I suspect the name is a nom-de-plume) he wrote knowledgeably about diverse historical matters.*

For many years there has been a controversy as to which, in fact, of the many European nations first discovered the American continent. Eric the Red was the first person to be credited with the achievement. This has now been disproved. A further theory ascribed the discovery to some Irish monks and St Brendan. It is now suggested that the Welsh actually achieved it.

Both the Irish and Welsh theories have a certain support. The proof required to sustain either claim has been, hitherto, noticeably missing. Actually, near-proof exists though none, apparently, seems to have recognised it.

Before discussing the "proof" it is necessary to decide the approximate period in which the event took place. As is well known, during the Vortigern period many British families left this country to settle in Armorica. This trend was more or less reversed after the advent of Ambrosius Aurelianus (the Great). However, after the death of Arthur (542) and, certainly, the death of Caninus Aurelianus, emigration began again. During this period, not only did families and bodies of fighting men leave the country for Armorica but also went farther afield to Byzantium, some troops enrolling in the armies of Belisarius. There would have been little difficulty in obtaining transport as ships, built to the design of the Classis Brittanica, Atlantic squadron, would have been available.

It was only after the battle of Dyrham that ships would have been confined to Dumnonia and, possibly, the present Wales. It is admitted that a ship or ships could have left for foreign parts after Dyrham but, as will be shown later, it is more probable that the voyage to the New World took place at the earlier period.

It is felt that few members will have studied the development of the North American continent; certainly not the distribution and development of the various tribes. In view of what follows they are strongly recommended to do so. The period 500 to 700 is the most enlightening. Up to about 500 the Mahicans and Abenaki dwelt side by side along the Eastern seaboard to the east of the Appalachian Mountains. From that time onward the tribes throughout North America were affected by a most traumatic experience. About 557 the Mahicans suddenly left their hunting grounds and settled for many years in the Ohio valley. It would seem that both the Abenaki and the Mahicans were deadly enemies; the Mahicans usually having the worst of it. It would have taken some major event to induce them to leave their traditional area. The distance they travelled is immense and far removed from everything to which they were accustomed.

It is necessary to examine the area in which, for nearly 200 years, they settled. The type of land was different, being mainly plain as opposed to forest. It was well-watered and capable of supporting massive herds of buffalo. Indeed, for those who were accustomed to living under such conditions, it was ideal. Had, therefore, there not been some powerful influence at work it is inconceivable that a forest tribe would have moved to such a place.

[Fort Ancient, Ohio]

Almost in the centre of the area above described is a plateau that, to the south-east, has a promontory of considerable size bounded on one side by the little Miami River. [...] The summit of the promontory is completely encircled by dry stone walls; all re-entrants being carefully covered. At all the angles the walls have been carefully rounded after the Roman fashion (see details of the "Castles" of Hamsterley, Co Durham). The main entrance is from the plateau. It is, or rather was, most impressive. The causeway was paved and passed between two (ceremonial?) pillars before entering the massive towers (?) between which hung the gates. Both towers are so designed as to accommodate guard-rooms. The huge fortress town had been constructed in two parts, the earlier being at the far end of the promontory and divided from the nearer by a narrow neck of land equally well fortified. As the settlement grew so the second part of the promontory was incorporated and fortified; the ceremonial entrance being constructed even later. It would seem that modern American excavation has been on a very limited scale and a major "Wheeler" type effort would be needed to expose the secrets of the place.

After the main fortress was completed additional, though smaller, fortresses were constructed further south down the Mississippi River; all are of a similar design. It is of peculiar interest to note the construction of all these fortresses bears no resemblance to any other work undertaken throughout the whole of the American continent. Indeed, to those who know South Cadbury and the "Castle" it would seem that they were seeing a projection of them.

It is suggested that some ships of the Atlantic Squadron achieved the passage of the North Atlantic making a landfall somewhere near Rhode Island. They joined forces with the Mahicans and decided to move inland. It is possible, like the Spaniards after them, they managed to bring horses with them. Having discovered the present site of Fort Ancient they recognised it as a potential New Camelot and took appropriate action. Then, some generations later, for some reason unknown, the whole design crumbled. The Mahicans returned to their homeland where they remained thereafter. Who knows but what it was their contact with the Romano-British that encouraged them to throw in their lot with the British during the Franco-British wars of the eighteenth century. ☙

Dr Ralegh Radford *Jess Foster*

• *Editorial comment in IX/4 (August 1976) on C A Ralegh Radford who died in 1999, aged 98.*

One morning in May readers of *The Guardian* opened their newspapers to see a photograph of Glastonbury Abbey ruins under a large heading announcing that *ARTHUR DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANY MORE*. It transpired that a Dr Robert Dunning, County

Historian, had just published a book in which he asserted there was no evidence worth a groat to show that Arthur had ever been buried at Glastonbury: he reckoned the monks, in 1190, mounted a Public Relations exercise to raise funds and entice pilgrims to the Abbey. The *Daily Express* printed a similar article and some of us seized our typewriters in the hope of initiating some correspondence and stirring up controversy. However, editors did not rate Arthur, nor even Glastonbury, to be of any general interest at this time and no letters were printed.

What we had intended to argue was that Dr Dunning's research was as superficial as Sir Thomas More's was on poor King Richard III, though not so slanderous. With belligerent Welsh princes still nursing Arthurian traditions and aspirations to the throne the English king had very good reasons for wanting to see Arthur finally buried for good. The Church, having suffered him as a pestilential thorn for a very long time, was bound to seize on a heaven-sent opportunity to get rid of him for good; to demonstrate that his bones lay in the good ground at the Abbey and that thus he had been reconciled in the end to authority, and gathered into the loving and forgiving bosom of Mother Church – well, for the dissenting populace he could never be more dead than that. A splendid re-burial with pomp and circumstance was an exercise in which Church and Court could join in perfect harmony.

It is true that, after long years of searching, Dr Ralegh Radford, in 1962, finally found the shallow grave between two "pyramids" described by the monks of 1190. [...] We hoped, when even Television had taken note of Dr Dunning's book, that Dr Radford would appear on a subsequent programme to describe his excavation of the original cavity with its "pyramids", but it seemed that Dr Radford was not available and this has become more understandable in view of another unhappy little coincidence which gained publicity almost at the same time.

Some years ago, it seems, Dr Radford was the Director of another excavation in Somerset when some rimmed sherds were discovered and identified as rare and unusual imported pot from the continent. A local potter, now retiring from business, has confessed that, at the time of this dig he was so sorry for the young differs who seemed to be having no luck that he "planted" some broken fragments from his own kiln on the site: these were the sherds recorded as being of unusual interest.

Now this is hard. Dr Radford has had a long and distinguished career as an archaeologist. There are sites almost all over England where, if you ask for the leaflet or booklet describing the monument or monastery that you happen to be visiting, the chances are that you will find the history of the building has been written by Dr Ralegh Radford. He was largely responsible for assembling the various bodies that became The Camelot Research Committee, and he worked tirelessly to help raise the money necessary for the Cadbury dig. He acted as a most tactful Chairman at all the many meetings held by that Committee. He is one of the nicer archaeologists, and more open-minded than most. Such things shouldn't happen to a nice guy at the end of a long and useful life. Mr Trehearne, for instance, managed to write a whole book about Glastonbury without mentioning Dr Radford's name or giving him credit for any digs there at all. Perhaps it did not occur to

him that such an omission not only diminished his own stature but also detracted from the validity of his book. ☙

The Other Malory *Sid Birchby*

• *X/1 (November 1976) included this article by Manchester member the late Sid Birchby, who was also a veteran science fiction aficionado and researcher of anomalous phenomena.*

The wooded ridge of Alderley, 12 miles south of Manchester, early one Autumn morning. A farmer from Mobberley, a village 4 miles distant, is taking a white horse to sell at Macclesfield Fair. His way is barred by a mysterious stranger who says that no one will buy the horse and that they will meet again at moonrise.

So goes the legend. When he returns with the horse unsold, the stranger, now revealed as an Enchanter, leads him into a cavern where soldiers in ancient chain-mail sleep beside their horses. One day they will arise to save England. But one stall is empty. The magician goes to a chest of coins and buys the farmer's horse.

There are many similar tales of Sleeping Warriors, often with Arthur as their leader. The idea of Merlin as their guardian, for so the Enchanter seems to be, is uncommon. Yet it develops naturally, for when we last hear of him in *Morte D'Arthur* he is imprisoned under a stone by the water-sprite Ninien. Now in his cave he protects those who will decide the last great battle of the realm.

If we stand on the mound of the Armada Beacon at the Edge, the tranquil Cheshire countryside we see is alive with the folk-lore of its Celtic/Mercian history. A phantom pack of Pwyll's red-and-white hounds races through Whirley Hall on New Year's Eve. At God's Knowl a dragon guards its buried treasure. The hound of the Baskervilles, a local family, appears on their coat-of-arms, and elsewhere too, by some accounts.

The story of the Wizard seems to be a revision of a very old tradition. It was first published at Macclesfield in 1820, as an anonymous popular booklet claiming to be based on a fireside story often told by Parson Shrigley of Alderley, who died in 1776. The tale was re-told in 1843 by Miss Stanley, whose family owned the Alderley estate. She bases it on an account which appeared in *The Manchester Mail* in 1805 (now lost) which drew on the memories of a very old man who had been in her family's service.

On the evidence, then, the legend as written comes from a local tale current in Parson Shrigley's lifetime, and before 1700 in his opinion. He is quoted as saying that the farmer's encounter took place about 80 years before his time. Possibly it took its Arthurian form from the parson himself, but there is some reason to suppose that the transformation took place in the 17th century.

Firstly, the tale glorifies not Alderley, but Mobberley. Its hero is a Mobberley man, and later, says the legend, he returned with about 20 neighbours to look for the cavern. A Mobberley author is most likely.

Secondly, the living of Mobberley has long been in the family of Mallory, and Sir Thomas Malory (one 'l') has done more to perpetuate the Arthurian legends than anyone else in England. It is possible that one of the rectors of Mobberley believed that he was descended from Sir Thomas, and decided to emulate him.

Little is known about Sir Thomas. Four families of Malory are known in the 15th century, but none can be positively identified as his. One of them lived near Ripon, Yorkshire, and Archdeacon Thomas Mallory of Richmond, who held office from 1603 to 1607, became Dean of Chester, 1607-44. In 1621 he bought the living of Mobberley.

Dean Thomas seems to have founded the Cheshire branch of the Mallorys. Thomas became a recurrent name in the family, suggesting a belief that one of their ancestors had written *Morte D'Arthur*. Whether this was so does not concern us. It is enough to provide a motive for a continuing interest in the Matter of Britain.

If this idea is right, the most likely reviser of the Alderley myth is Dean Thomas himself. He was a man of wide interests in literature, and it happens that we know that he borrowed books from the Holcroft library, which contained many books on esoteric subjects including *Brute of England* and *Le Vita del Merlino*.

The story of the Holcroft library begins when the Abbey of Vale Royal, 11 miles from Mobberley, was granted to Sir Thomas Holcroft at the Dissolution. Perhaps he acquired the monastery library. At all events, from about 1580 to 1616 he collected books and made them available to scholars. For anyone in East Cheshire, his library must have been a magnet, and it is not surprising that Dean Thomas consulted it. A catalogue made in 1616, when Vale Royal was sold to the Cholmondeleys, shows that 14 books were on loan to him. It is thought that he borrowed upwards of 50 all told.

A very curious library. In 1601, the final entry in Dr John Dee's private diary records that Sir Thomas Holcroft visited him at Manchester. The reason is not stated, but if Holcroft was book-hunting, then some of the works to which Dean Thomas had access were from Dr Dee's own collection. What we would not give for them to-day!

Alternatively, there was more between Holcroft and Dee than we know. An odd identity of names occurs. When Dr Dee moved to Manchester in 1595, a carrier named Percival handled his belongings. Someone of the same name is mentioned in the Holcroft inventory as taking books to a borrower, and from 1597 onwards one Hamo Perseval is the incumbent of Whitegate, next to Vale Royal.

This library may also be the source of a collection of popular prophecies known as the *Predictions of Robert Nixon*, the Cheshire Seer, first published in 1714 "from an authentic MS found among the papers of a Cheshire gentleman, lately deceased". They are in gnomic verses, not unlike those of Mother Shipton and the Prophecies of Merlin, and it has been said that many of them refer either to Vale Royal or to the Cholmondeleys.

They are quoted by the Enchanter in the 1820 legend. For example, his prophecy that the warriors will awake on the day when England is lost and won thrice between sunrise and eventide is a direct quotation. Despite Miss Stanley's protest in 1843 that "the story has been told mixed up with some prophecies that do not properly belong to it", both accounts are related and may be re-workings of local folk-traditions inspired by the Holcroft library, though not necessarily by the same person.

A contemporary re-statement of the theme is made by Alan Garner, who was born locally. Further insight comes from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Yet more may be received from *The Palatine Notebook*, a Victorian miscellany about Cheshire which should

be available from specialist libraries such as County Record Offices. Enquiries may be made to the present writer, who would be glad to exchange information. ☙

Brocéliande *Anthony Smith-Masters*

• *Anthony Smith-Masters, a former music master at Marlborough College, was also a noted composer, mainly of chamber music, and produced audiotapes of the Arthurian legends authored by Jess Foster; this lyrical article was from XI/1 (January 1978), the second issue by the present editor.*

The Wood of Brocéliande, where Merlin entered his last sleep, is in Normandy, part of one of the great state forests of France. To reach it you must start from the village of Beauvais, which could perhaps be translated as 'Good Will'. Then you drive for mile after mile along a straight track through the forest; the track is called Le Val Sans Retour, the Valley of No Return. At the end of the track is the little hamlet called Mauvaises Pensées, Evil Thoughts. Who chose these strange names, and when, and why?

Leaving your car behind at Evil Thoughts, you follow a path rising steeply among the trees. It is solemn and quiet. There are hardly any birds. Conversation flags, perhaps because of the hill.

At the top the path turns and goes down a little way. You hear the sound of trickling water and come out into a small clearing in the wood. There is a stone basin a few feet square. The water wells up from below the weeds, very clear, very cold, splashes over a stone lip and is soon lost in the undergrowth. You look down into the pool and your eyes meet treetops and blue sky. You feel drawn down, or is it up?

You sit on the stone coping or on a tree stump and let the surroundings speak to you in their fashion. There are meaningful Druidic trees planted round the clearing; hazel, willow, rowan, birch. Silence, peacefulness, meditativeness, healing. Each visitor takes in impressions according to his receptiveness. Some have a strong feeling of a presence, forceful but kindly. My own memory is of paradox, of looking through a hole in the ground at the sky.

We cannot stay long at this level of existence. We have to go down the hill again, back to Evil Thoughts and motor cars. But the people who drive back along the Valley of No Return are not the same as started out that morning. ☙

Merlin at Alderley Edge *Sid Birchby*

• *It was appropriate that as a Mancunian Sid should, in XI/1 (January 1978), write again about the local legend which also featured in Alan Garner's famous 1960 children's book* The Weirdstone of Brinsingamen.

The story of the Cheshire Enchanter has often been told. A farmer from Mobberley was taking a horse to sell at Macclesfield Fair on a misty autumn morning. As he passed by the heath near Alderley Edge, he met a stranger who predicted that no one would buy the horse, and that they would meet again that night. So it happened. He led the farmer and his horse to a pair of iron gates in a rock. Inside was a cave piled with treasure, in which warriors and horses slept. One horse was missing. The Enchanter took coins from a chest,

bought the farmer's horse, and led him out. Nevermore was the cavern found.

Sleeping warrior legends are not uncommon. Often, their leader is named as King Arthur, though not invariably. In Germany, it is Barbarossa and his knights who sleep under the mountain until the day when ravens cease to fly about it. At Alderley, the feature of a guardian is unusual. He is not named, nor is a sleeping King mentioned, but we shall see that Merlin and Arthur are implicit in the tale. By unpeeling several layers we may learn how myths arise.

The scene is a wooded ridge 11 miles east of the decayed hamlet of Nether Alderley where there is now little but a church, a watermill and a closed inn. At about the same distance NW of the ridge is the modern village of Alderley Edge, which was developed as a wealthy commuter satellite of Manchester in Victorian times.

All the district was owned by the Lords Stanley for centuries until the 1930s, and they were able to preserve or change whatever they wished. The Legend of the Wizard was thought to be worth recording in a book by the Hon. Miss Stanley in 1843. An earlier anonymous account appeared in 1820, allegedly drawn from a tale "long told by the firesides" and often told by Parson Shrigley in the previous century.

There is no reason to doubt that folklore made much of the Edge. Copper bearing sandstone was mined from it, perhaps as early as the Bronze Age. The remains of blocked adits and tunnels crumble away in the woods, lending an air of mystery reminiscent of the Roman gold mines of Pumpsaint. Round barrows, standing stones and holy wells are marked on the maps of the district.

Analysis of the earliest written account of 1820 shows its basis of fact. The Fair that the farmer journeyed to was probably Macclesfield Wakes Fair, held at Michaelmas. Fairs differed from the weekly markets, being usually annual events for such purposes as hiring labour or selling horses, rather than for selling produce. So a farmer with a horse to sell would go to the Michaelmas Fair.

The route described is also correct, when one follows it along the old lanes and bridle paths. For instance we read that when the farmer returned at moonrise he saw the Enchanter "reclining on a rock beneath the seven firs" at a certain point. The rock, although not the trees, can still be seen by the roadside. It is an L-shaped glacial boulder, very much like a seat with a back, on which one can recline. Old maps show it as a parish boundary, and other boundary markers lie on the route to the Fair or to the Cave.

Here are two layers of the myth: the old route from Mobberley to the Fair, before modern roads were built, and a memory of Beating the Bounds. As to the first, the earliest accounts clearly show that the village of Mobberley, about 5 miles west, is being glorified, rather than Nether Alderley. The farmer comes from there, and later he returns with some neighbours to look for the cavern. Mobberley men rule OK.

Beating the Bounds was once an important annual occasion, when territory was patrolled to assert ownership, much as birds and other animals do. In March 1822, the Mayor of Macelesfield led the procession. On private estates the bailiff went round periodically and made a report called a Terrier. This happened on the Stanley estate in

1841 in order to assess Tithe Awards due the Church.

The Merlin/Arthur layer takes us back to Mobberley. In 1621 the living of its church, *ie* the right to appoint its clergy, was bought by Thomas Mallory, a Yorkshireman who became Dean of Chester and founded the Cheshire branch of his family. Whether or not he claimed Sir Thomas Malory (with one *l*) as his ancestor, we cannot say, but it is highly probable. The family origins of the author of *Morte d'Arthur* are debatable, but Yorkshire has one claim.

Dean Thomas certainly had literary interests. He borrowed more than 50 books from the Holcroft library, and 14 were still booked out to him when the collection was sold in 1616. This library was assembled by Sir Thomas Holcroft, who bought the Abbey of Vale Royal in Cheshire, at the Dissolution, and perhaps its monastic books also. At all events he began to collect books and lend them to scholars. In 1601 he visited the aged Dr John Dee in Manchester, possibly book hunting. The 1616 inventory records such esoteric works as *Brute of England* and a *Life of Merlin*. There is no proof that Dean Thomas borrowed these, but if we are looking for someone who may have re-written a folk tale "told round the firesides" in Arthurian style, he had Motive, Means and Opportunity.

Whether or not his ancestor did write *Morte d'Arthur* is immaterial. He may have thought so. Therefore we see how rural traditions way be influenced by sophisticated literary notions. If we find folk tales resembling legends told in wider contexts, we need not assume independent origins. Ideas passed about quickly even in those days.

Merlin stands for something that keeps nagging at us. The analysis of legends, by peeling away their layers, is a way to enlightenment. Possibly he stands for a counterpart of the Old Wise Woman. The earliest form of the place name Alderley means the Wood of the Wise Man, and a wizard was more of a counsellor than a magician. Merlin gave advice more than he worked magic. So did the Anglo-Saxon magician Woden, who was also usually encountered in the form of an old man sitting on a mound by the roadside, like the Enchanter.

The special Alderley contribution to our understanding is that Merlin guards the sleeping warriors against the day when England shall be in peril. What will happen then is described in another Cheshire folk tradition, the prophecies of Robert Nixon, the Cheshire Seer. They are a set of gnomic utterances, ascribed to a 17th-century village idiot, but very much more than that, describing a Ragnarok of confused grandeur and epic proportions that intimates what Arthur will have to face when he and his knights awaken.

Alderley shows us a Merlin with a responsibility to the Future, and a conscience. It may, of course, be a "Dean Thomas" layer to the myth. Do allegories grow as our consciences sharpen? ☙

Mordred; Or Something Rotten in the State! *Chris Lovegrove*

• *This examination by the editor of two apparently unrelated tales appeared in XI/3 (July 1978).*

If the *Morte d'Arthur* was ever played on the Victorian stage we all know at whom we would have hissed. If Judas is the villain of the New Testament, who betrays his lord and causes the break-up of the fellowship of the Last Supper, then Mordred is clearly the

villain in Malory who betrays his lord and causes the break up of the fellowship of the Round Table. If Judas dies on a tree like his lord, Mordred dies by the sword like his lord too.

Let's take a closer look at this well-known rotter! He is the nephew of King Arthur, some say his illegitimate son; he covets the throne and the power. The picture drawn by Malory seems to be borne out by the earlier *Welsh Triads* in which Medrawd came to Arthur's court at Celliwig in Cornwall: there he 'left neither food nor drink but, worst of all, dragged Gwenhwyfar from the royal chair and struck her a blow'. This was one of the Three Unrestrained Ravagings of Britain; the second was when Arthur did tit-for-tat at Medrawd's court.

If Mordred is black through and through, he strangely reminds us of another Dark Age figure who is traditionally associated with black. This too has claims on the throne, plots against the king through what he regards as the queen's infidelity and would strike the queen (though someone tries to restrain him). He too is a prince, a nephew of a king, but also a king's son, and he kills, and is killed by, the king. If this too sounds like melodrama, it is; it is part of the plot of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. But the difference is this: Hamlet is the hero, but Mordred the villain.

One might raise objections. The blood relationships, though ambiguously described above, are different. Hamlet was possibly an historical Danish prince called Amleth, Mordred (if he existed at all) a character in British legend. Moreover history is full of royal intrigues, and to say that Mordred is like Hamlet in this respect is not a very profound conclusion. In other words, the differences are greater than the superficial similarities.

But let's play devil's advocate for a moment. *Hamlet* is founded on paradoxes, as Hamlet tells Gertrude: "You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife, | And would it were not so, you are my mother". He calls his uncle Claudius his "dear Mother": "Father and mother is man and wife, man and wife is one flesh, and so, my mother".

Celtic thinking too, is full of such paradoxes. The usual tradition is that Mordred's mother is Arthur's half-sister, Morgan le Fay, and by Malory's time Mordred is the bastard son of Arthur, who has committed both adultery and incest with his own maternal aunt. Queen Margause. Thus Mordred is Arthur's son and nephew, as Hamlet is Claudius' stepson and nephew.

Amleth and Mordred may well have been historical but the stories they are involved in are patently archetypal, and not in the generalised sense of the rise and fall of dynasties. It seems certain that this tale of revenge, familiar in European tradition (as in the Greek story of Orestes), was carried to Scandinavia from Celtic Ireland and finally written down in the 12th century by the Dane Saxo Grammaticus. It may indeed be that ultimately Mordred and Hamlet are the same character; of Mordred's origins we know little. In the earlier Welsh traditions he is not even obviously a villain, but Arthur, strangely, might be. When we come to Malory we learn of Arthur commanding that all babes of noble birth born on May Day (conceived therefore at Lammastide) were to be set adrift in an unmanned vessel to founder. But Mordred survives, as does the older Hamlet sent by sea to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to be executed by England's king, but turning the tables on

his former friends and escaping in a pirate ship.

Mordred's black name is relatively recent, perhaps partly by the similarity of, his name with "murder". There is in Welsh tradition a certain Medr, whose name means marksman, who might put us in wind of Amleth (who killed his enemies with sharpened staves). In Irish tradition we are reminded of Mider, who like the British hero Tristan, abducts the reigning king's wife. None of these are villains, and in Scottish medieval tradition Mordred is even a legitimate claimant to the throne, and it is Arthur who is the bastard usurper.

If there is no clear-cut answer to the questions of Hamlet-Mordred's moral position, then the question must be of a different order. A clue way he found in Tennyson, at present an unfashionable poet, but for all that one whose comments may still be valid. In *The Passing of Arthur* we read, "And slowly answered Arthur from the barge: | 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new...'" That the order is not just a mundane knightly order is confirmed by Sir Bedivere: 'But now the whole Round Table is dissolved | Which was an image of the mighty world.'

The authors of *Hamlet's Mill* assert that "Myth is essentially cosmological". We may, if we like, agree in interpreting myths like the overthrow of the Round Table Order by Mordred's machinations as symbolic of new world orders initiated by precession of the equinoxes.

Or we may, instead, look to lesser, but no less vital cycles. Henry Treece's *The Green Man* brings the Dark Age figures of Amleth and Arthur together in a kind of mythic history, which he explains in a more down-to-earth manner in his preface: "All myth, most legend, and much of history follow the archetypal pattern of the seeding, burgeoning, dying year. Sometimes this pattern seems to be a coarse one; but it is one which we know to be real."

So, the something rotten in the state, which Hamlet's friends took to be the prevailing power, and which from mischief maker Mordred's point of view was Arthur's regime, might be regarded as the necessary decay which precedes death and resurrection.

Which, perhaps, is what the Once and Future King is all about. ☙

King Arthur's Congresbury *Vince Russett*

• *Vince was editor of the earth mysteries magazine* Picwinnard *in the 1970s and is currently North Somerset's County Archaeologist; his introduction to Dark Age Somerset came in September 1978 (XI/4).*

We are all accustomed, by now, to thinking that Cadbury = Camelot, and that Arthur used South Cadbury Castle, in South Somerset, for his base during the operations against the Saxons, which culminated in the historic battle of Badon, in or about 512 or 518.

By doing this, we miss a great part of the story, for Arthur, or someone very like him, was refortifying another Cadbury in North Somerset, at the end of the 5th century, and beginning of the 6th.

The area was a marshy wasteland, returned to the sea by its increase in level that occurred in the late third century, leaving Roman settlements and Iron Age settlements and villages under two feet of clay in the Somerset levels. It was almost certainly a pagan region, for the missionaries who were to convert the area only arrived in the generation

after Badon, when it was relatively safe to do so. The old Romano-British temples on the hilltops were probably still in use in some cases; for example at Henley Wood, near Yatton, where the sub Roman use of the Temple was continuous, after which it seems to have been utilised as a Christian cemetery. The one on Brean Down was abandoned long before Arthur's period, yet it too seems to have been utilised by at least one Christian, who built an East/West oriented building on the hilltop, between the old ruinous Roman Temple and the round barrow to the south.

The victory of Badon secured the region, but in the immediate pre-Badon times, there was military activity in this area, too. Quite what was being guarded is unclear: if there was already a flourishing community at Glastonbury, the chain of hillforts across the levels would have formed an ideal 'holding line' against Irish raiders or Saxon pirates. Whether the Irish were still raiding the coast is unclear although Palladius and Patrick had nominally converted Ireland, no doubt there were still organised bands of pirates.

Besides possible sea borne invasion, there was the Roman road which undoubtedly ran along the coast from Gatcombe to the region of Congresbury, or the second that ran from the lead mining settlement of Charterhouse on Mendip to Uphill near Weston Super Mare. These were probably still vital lines of communication.

In the late fifth century, the hillfort of Cadbury/Congresbury, abandoned since the first century Celts had left it after the Roman conquest, was reoccupied by the Arthurian leader. A new rampart was built across the centre of the old camp, and the inside of the Iron Age rampart were strengthened with new stone constructions. At least eight timber buildings of this period have been found, one being 25 feet long and 10 feet wide.

During the period of fifth century and sixth century occupation, iron and other metal working was going on, and, slightly surprisingly, flint was again used in the manufacture of tools, an Iron Age Celtic technique which must have been revived at the time, for there is little evidence of it in Roman times. There were large quantities of fragments of imported Mediterranean ware, more than at any other site other than Tintagel, and a number of pieces of Gaulish ware not found anywhere else.

The hillfort defences do not seem to have been called upon for use, as they were in decay by the time of Badon, and around then a wooden building with an apsidal end was built over the rampart of about 30 years before. To summarise, this hillfort had equally as much evidence of occupation by an early sixth century leader as did Cadbury/Camelot.

Nearby Cadbury/Tickenham is renowned in the folklore of North Somerset as the 'real' Camelot, and King Arthur and his knights are supposed to sleep under it. There is no indication from the extremely scanty archaeological record of this massive earthwork that it was reused in those times, but the fact that St Padarn arrived at Nailsea in the immediate post-Badonic period and set up a church would seem to indicate that there was someone to form a Christian community, and as is seen in several other cases, it is not unlikely that his congregation were the hillfort dwellers at Cadbury/Tickenham.

Near Cadbury/Congresbury itself, St Congar founded an oratory, later to become a monastery, in the spot which is now Congresbury church. It is just possible, however, that his first church was either the building referred to above, across the earthworks, or

somewhere nearby, as the old Roman Temple nearby was in use, as mentioned above, for a sub Roman, and probably Christian, cemetery. This occurred about 530.

Other hillforts show the same pattern. Combwich hillfort, some miles away at the mouth of the Parrett, was refortified and reoccupied at the same period around 500 AD. There is a sub-Roman cemetery there, too, which would seem to have been used until the Saxons arrived in the eighth century and founded nearby Cannington church.

There is no archaeological evidence from any other hillfort of Arthurian connections, but Brent Knoll earthwork, which stands in splendid isolation amidst the Levels today, has a legend that Ider, one of King Arthur's bravest knights, killed three giants there. As if in confirmation of this story, a large iron sword, possibly dated to the Dark Ages, was found there in the last century, but has since been lost. The locals, recognising better than many a savant how myth is often truth, named it Ider's Sword, and said that it was three feet long. Mrs Dobson, author of *Somerset* in the County Archaeology series, thought it quite likely that Brent Knoll was the site of Badon itself.

Banwell hillfort, which has never been archaeologically examined, may have been reoccupied. There was certainly enough of a population in the area in immediate post-Badonic times to form the nucleus of a Christian cemetery at Winthill, nearby, around the ruins of a Roman villa. Indeed, it has been considered that St Congar was active here, too, and that he founded a monastery. He is certainly remembered in another nearby village, Badgworth, where the church is dedicated to him.

Worlebury hillfort, above Weston Super Mare, may have been reoccupied at this time. Hoards of Roman coins have been found, showing late Roman interest here, but no recent excavations have been carried out. It is of interest, though, that St Kew is said to have founded the church of nearby Kewstoke. If she did, it would have again been in the immediate post-Badonic time. A flight of steps leading up to the hillfort from Kewstoke church is still called St Kew's Steps, and the legends have it that she used to "climb up to the top to pray".

These connections of the Celtic missionaries with areas very near to hillforts in the period in question seem very hard to explain, except by assuming that the people in the forts formed their congregations. Missionaries need people to preach to. This may have been the deciding factor in the abandonment of the forts, and ill the only case at all well investigated, Cadbury/Congresbury, the inhabitants had drifted away by about 600 AD, three generations after Congar's arrival.

To draw the threads together: the Celtic revival of the 5th/6th centuries appears to have been much more widespread and better organised than was at first thought. Perhaps Arthur himself lived for periods at Cadbury/Congresbury, peering out from the wooden house on the windswept hilltop at the Celtic town around him. No wonder the Welsh missionaries were accepted so readily in the sunny years after Badon. The re establishment of the old Celtic way of life on the hilltops must have seemed a miracle. It is pleasing to see that all of Somerset had its part to play perhaps there is still a lesson to be learnt from Arthur and his realm, about freedom and about life, and, above all, about the sanctity of this Magic Isle. cs

Arthur: a Sense of Place *Roger Davie Webster*

• *An article from XIII/1 (Winter 1979), the twentieth anniversary edition with Arthur as the theme*

Arthur is an intensely personal demigod. He is personal because he is wholly and unequivocally British. He was not borne here from a Land to the West, he did not climb out of a spaceship and he did not spring, fully armed, from an earthly magnetic hiccup anywhere near Stonehenge.

He had a mother and a father, a childhood and eventually became the 'Man of the Moment' in the Britons' Dark Age war with the Saxons. No-one, however laudatory they have been, has ever suggested that he was perfect. Percival was the perfect knight (or fool) but he has never commanded the excitement and interest that has been Arthur's.

Arthur was a human being, he ate, drank, slept, and fornicated. He fought exceptionally well and slew droves of Saxons (940 in a single combat if Nennius is to be believed!). He was a brilliant leader of men and probably invented the kind of cavalry we have seen in Europe, largely unchanged, until the Second World War rendered them useless.

But it is not what he was that excites us so much so what he has become. Historically Arthur is but a sketchy character. Centuries separate his life and deeds from the first reliable historical sources that report them. The only recognised contemporary historian ignores him.

Nennius says of him "Then it was that the magnanimous Arthur, with all the kings and military force of Britain, fought against the Saxons and though there were many more noble than himself, yet he was twelve times chosen their commander..." Many more noble... This man was not a king, or even particularly high born, yet he has become godlike with the passage of time.

Two reasonably distinct traditions spring from this meagre historical figure. A Celtic tradition, obscure, often of dubious origin, but always secretive and fascinating. And a Romantic tradition which, however it may claim to stem from the former, in fact owes it very little.

Arthurian Romance

The Romantic tradition springs from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* in which Arthur is born out of Uther Pendragon's adulterous union with Igerna, wife of Gorlois the duke of Cornwall. Merlin engineers the adultery by magically making of Uther a likeness to Gorlois. Arthur becomes king upon Uther's death, subdues the Saxons and eventually the whole of Europe. He returns, on the point of taking Rome, when he hears of Mordred's adultery with Guinevere. He fights Mordred and receives a fatal wound at the battle of Camlan.

Between the subjugation of Ireland and the invasion of Europe, Britain under Arthur enjoyed a long period of peace, and it was this part of Geoffrey's story that particularly appealed to the romancers of the mediaeval French court, enmeshed as they were in the fashions of chivalry and courtly love. This gave rise to the French romances whence came many of the most famous Arthurian legends. The Round Table first appears in a *Brut* of Maistre Wace where, we are told, it was invented as a means of settling disputes of

precedence among Arthur's knights. The Sword in the Stone is to be found in a romance accredited to Robert de Boron at the end of the twelfth century.

The Grail becomes firmly linked with Arthur In the *Conte du Graal* by Chrétien de Troyes and it is the cup used at the Last Supper in Robert de Boron circa 1190. The Grail is fundamental to Arthur's Christianity despite the fact that he himself does not enter into the quest.

The Grail has its Celtic ancestor in the Cauldron of Plenty and traces of the earlier tradition may be found in the *High History of the Holy Grail* or *Perlesvaus* where Gawain is shown the three objects three times and where three drops of blood fall upon the table. There is a clear relationship with the Welsh Triadic tradition and an obvious allusion to Tallesin's three drops of wisdom from the Cauldron of Ceridwen.

The Grall brings us back to Britain and to Glastonbury, probably the site of Britain's first Christian settlement. The story goes that Joseph of Arimathea brought the Holy Grail (variously the cup used at the Last Supper or cruets containing the blood of Christ) to Glastonbury not long after the Ascension. He and his companions were granted twelve hides of land by Arviragus, king of the district, upon which they founded the monastic community which later became the Abbey. The Grail is said to have been spirited away from the Abbey shortly before the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539 and many believe it to be the cup presently lodged at Nanteos in Wales.

The French Arthurian cycle eventually returned to Britain, most notably in Malory's famous romance. And it is with us still, in the more prosaic and partly digested forms of novels by T H White and Mary Stewart among others.

Celtic tradition

The Celtic Arthurian tradition (mainly Welsh) is fragmentary and disjointed. Oral tradition, such as the Welsh stories of Arthur, is subject to enormous pressures both pecuniary and political. The travelling story-teller may expect to make more of his craft if he can graft his marvels upon the locality in which he finds himself. And if he can press into service some mystery or heroic deed to flatter the local nobility he may expect a greater reward thereby. This might explain why hollow hills containing Arthur and his sleeping warriors are to be found all over the country and why Camelot has been claimed by localities literally the length and breadth of the Kingdom.

Nevertheless these traditions, however diverse geographically, are persistent. Celtic mythology knows little of the Christian Arthur and nothing at all of round tables or swords in stones, but they do tell of Arthur the hero, the focus of Celtic identity in the Dark Ages.

He is said to ride with the Wild Hunt of Gwyn ap Nudd, king of the Celtic underworld. They hunt *y Twrch Trwydd*, the Wild Boar. The pig was the chief domestic animal of the Celts and as such the pearl of an agrarian culture. Around Pumpsaint, a specially magical area of West Wales, there is, among other marvels, a Waun Cynydd (the Huntsman's Moor) and, over a hill, a Cwm Twrch (the Valley of the Boar).

The Celts will not have it that Arthur is dead. The legends of a Hollow Hill are legion but that of Craig y Dinas is typical: there is a cavern whose entrance lies beneath a hazel

tree wherein Arthur sleeps with his warriors. In the passage leading to the cavern there is a bell. If it rings the warriors will awake crying "Is it day?" to which the stealthy visitor must reply "No, sleepest thou on'. In the midst of the warriors lie a pile of gold and a pile of silver. The visitor must take from only one pile. One day the bell will ring to summon Arthur to lead the warriors of Wales to a great victory.

A Cornish tradition has it that Arthur, like Brân the Blessed, lives on in the form of a raven. On the other side of Cwm Twrch from Waun Cynydd near Pumpsaint lies Cefn Branddu (the ridge of the Black Raven). Ravens still haunt its craggy heights. And at the Tower of London, the White Tower, the raven is yet all but a sacred bird.

Arthurian reality

Near Sparkford in Somerset there lies a fortified hill called South Cadbury Castle. If there ever was a Camelot (setting aside the fact that the name is twelfth-century and French) then it was here. The excavations (1966–70) directed by Leslie Alcock showed the hill to have been occupied In the Neolithic period and fortified extensively in the Iron Age. The defences were partially destroyed during the Roman occupation but it was refortified in the Arthurian period. Its size and position in relation to the contemporary Saxon occupation make it the only serious contender for the site of Arthur's Camelot. There were, however, no knights in shining armour, no plumed helms, no ladies in flowing gowns. The real Camelot was filled with rough hardened soldiers who rode, not mighty chargers, but the infinitely cleverer, more adaptable native ponies we still have today. The ramparts were not stone but earth and rubble and topped, not with turrets and fluttering banners, but a crude wooden palisade.

Between Cadbury and Glastonbury lie the Somerset levels. These marshlands in the Dark Ages would often have been covered with shallow water. Out of these waters, their outlines blurred by clinging veils of mist, rose the higher ground of Glastonbury and the Tor. It is difficult to imagine that the Celts' sacred Isle of Avalon could have been anywhere else. Close to Arthur's fortress, site of the first Christian settlement, a ley centre of importance, Glastonbury is a heart that beats at the very centre of the Arthurian mystery.

Of Arthur's death we know little. The Celtic tradition will not accept that he is dead. In the *Stanzas of the Graves* (a list of the burials of the great and not-so-great Celtic heroes, in the *Black Book of Carmarthen*) we find "A mystery to the world the grave of Arthur' or "Not wise the thought, a grave for Arthur". The monks of Glastonbury in the twelfth century claimed to have found a grave in the Abbey precincts containing the bodies of Arthur and Guinevere and a leaden cross inscribed *HIC IACET INCLITVS REX ARTVRIVS IN INSVLA AVALLONIA SEPVLTVS* (Here lies the famous King Arthur buried in the Isle of Avalon). Unfortunately, although sketches of it remain, the cross has disappeared.

The memory of Arthur

I believe that the particular importance of Arthur lies in the fact that he fixes Time and Place. His deeds and legends are rooted in places like Glastonbury and Cadbury at a time when Celtic mysticism fused briefly with the strengthening Christianity. The old Celtic religion suggests an intense maternal relationship with the earth, a sense of raw power and an acceptance of death and rebirth, characteristic of the corn rituals, so deep it can

barely have been conscious.

So deep must these beliefs have run that the paternal, highly intellectual faith of Christianity could have overlaid them without ever materially disturbing their roots. There is a persistent sense that something remarkable happened in the Dark Ages. Perhaps the blend of Celtic ritual and Christianity allowed, just for a moment, the glimpse of an integrated mystical experience, a flash of comprehension combining earth and spirit that has never been repeated. And perhaps some half buried race memory within us harks back to that place and that time.

Arthur is the focus of that time and he fixes it irrevocably in space. It is here in Britain, and maybe, if we do not try too hard, we could believe that one day he will return and bring with him something we have lost.

Sir Edmund Chambers said in 1927 in the closing line of *Arthur of Britain* (accountably the best work of reference yet written concerning Arthur): "But the flames which once burnt around the memory of Arthur have long ago sunk into grey ashes. He wakes no national passions now." I am sure he would be delighted to know how wrong he was. ☙

Arthur and the Bear of Arcady *Chris Turner*

• *Another contribution to XIII/1, this one by the late Chris Turner*

Many readers will be familiar with the myth of Apollo's annual return to his homeland of Hyperborea. This blessed Island, far to the north, was inhabited by a race [which] dwelt in peace and happiness and worshipped Phoebus Apollo, personification of the Sun's light, in their magnificent circular temple, renowned even in ancient Greece. Apollo's journey, undertaken in Autumn, was by means of a celestial chariot drawn by flying dragons. A pretty tale full of intriguing allusions, but of little immediate relevance to our own Bear of Britain. Or is it?

Let us turn our attention to Apollo's twin sister Artemis. Unlike most sister-goddesses, Artemis is not just her brother in drag, a simple echo, but rather a complementary figure rounding out the cosmic concept of Apollo from a purely female standpoint. Like her brother, Artemis bears the epithet "Phoebus", celestial light, but of the moon not the sun. She was also revered by the women of Hyperborea. Artemis did not journey to them, however, but received Hyperborean pilgrims at her birthplace shrine at Delos. Following Prof G Hawkins' demonstration of the intimate solar/lunar interrelation at Stonehenge it may be suggested that the Hyperboreans worshipped Artemis as well as Apollo in their circular temple.

At this point we start to collect polyphones, groups of sound patterns. The first and most obvious is ART and others that crop up with unusual frequency are ARC (Greek root for *bear*) and BER or BRE (Germanic root for *bear*). The relevance of these polyphones is open to dispute but the interconnections are, at least, interesting. The reader must make of them what he will.

One of the retinue of Artemis was the nymph Callisto, a virgin, as were all Artemis' companions; strict chastity being a *sine qua non* of membership. Zeus managed to seduce

Callisto by a rather underhand stratagem and, although arguably the injured party, she was savagely punished by Artemis who changed the unfortunate pregnant nymph into a she-bear (aha!) and loosed her hunting dogs on her. In the nick of time, Zeus intervened, snatched Callisto from the dogs and set her in the sky as a brilliant constellation which still bears the name of the Great Bear. The other name for the constellation is, of course, the Plough (Ploughman in Welsh is *arddw*, plough is *arddwy*). The dogs are also set in the sky next to Ursa Major under the name of Canes Venatici and are fated to chase Callisto around the pole until doomsday. Callisto's infant son did not perish. He was named Arcas and achieved such fame that he left his name to Arcadia which became the chief centre of devotion to Artemis.

Artemis was primarily portrayed as a bow-wielding huntress of severe chastity. No allowance was made for any lapse no matter how accidental or innocently intended. In Crete she was known as the Sweet Virgin or Britomartis. Although as a huntress she was a bringer of death, she was usually merciful, provided her sexual sensitivities had not been offended, and killed animals and humans alike with her merciful arrows and was greatly revered for so doing: a quick, clean, painless death being a rare and much sought-after blessing in the ancient world. She was, however, worshipped as the astonishing multi-breasted goddess of fecundity at Ephesus which completes the fundamental triad of the female principle: virgin, mother and and death-hag known variously am the Fates, Norns or Weird (Wyrd) Sisters.

Whether or not as a result of the episode with Callisto, the attribute of Artemis was a she-bear. In a striking parallel, a Celtic she-bear goddess was worshipped in what is now Switzerland under the name of Artio. Her chief site of worship is now known as Berne and bears are still kept in the town's bear-pit as civic mascots. The bear appears on the city arms and flag and may be seen on the number plate of any Swiss car (CH plate on back) with a BE registration (five I-Spy points). The Bear also figures prominently in the heraldry of Berlin and Madrid where it is shown on hind legs clawing the trunk of a tree. This representation is, of course, also the badge of our own Earls of Warwick and innumerable Bear and Ragged Staff taverns.

In northern Europe the bear has long been associated with the concepts of resurrection and rebirth being the only large animal to apparently "die" through the winter and become "reborn" in the spring. Strangely enough, recent research shows that the bear does not hibernate as such. Its body temperature and metabolism do not drop to anything like hibernation level. When external conditions become untenable the bear simply goes to sleep until the environment is right for its re-emergence. Which is more or less what we have been saying about the Bear of Britain all along. ☙

Triangles *Paddy Slater*

Introduction

In the fifteenth century Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* gave the trappings of the time in which it was written to a legend that dated back to pre Dark Age Britain. At the close of her 1978 Arthurian novel *The Pendragon* (New York, Knopf 1978) Catherine

Christian quotes a psychiatrist as having said "the story of King Arthur and his knights is a myth. Like all great myths, it has deep psychiatric significance. Its roots reach down into the collective unconscious, and extend back into prehistoric race memory." Christian amends this by adding "nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could." It was the Celtic Bards who first kept the legend going, handing it down from generation to generation.

Fifteen centuries have passed but Arthur and the Matter of Britain have inspired romances both before and since Malory. In the Winter 1979 issue of the *Journal of the Pendragon Society*, Roger Davie Webster says "... there is a persistent sense that something remarkable happened in the Dark Ages. Perhaps the blend of Celtic ritual and Christianity allowed, just for a moment, the glimpse of an integrated mystical experience ... and perhaps some half buried race memory within us harks back to that place and that time ..." Perhaps this explains why the story crops up, again and again. In recent years several novels have been based on the Arthurian legend. I shall attempt to contrast the love triangle in three of these with that of Malory's *Morte*.

Malory

Sir Thomas Malory's love triangle consists of King Arthur, Queen Guenevere and Sir Lancelot. These are the classic prototypes, but various modern authors have studied the histories and legends and changes occur in their various versions. Malory was writing of courtly love. Charles Moorman, in his *Book of Kyng Arthur*(University of Kentucky Press, 1945) says that "his treatment ... is so consistent ... that one can hardly avoid the conclusion that ... he had taken pains to adapt ... this aspect (Guenevere and Lancelot) of the chivalric code to his own notions of the Arthurian characters ... "

According to J A W Bennett's *Essays on Malory* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963) much of the conflict is typical of the courtly love tradition, such as Lancelot's behaviour. His surrender of Guenevere and subsequent retreat into exile is an example, as Malory wishes to regard him as "the best of all men". Bennett feels that Malory intended us to admire Lancelot in both of his roles as Guenevere's lover and Arthur's loyal knight. Two things he further feels remain at the end: "the power of human affection and the remembrance of the past."

Moorman, on the other hand, says that Malory feared that the love story would prove to be "a single flaw in an otherwise perfect world." He mentions Lancelot's instability as being demonstrated. This theme appears again in one of the more recent novels. "Malory then adds to Lancelot's modest reply that he knows he 'was never none of the beste'." He also knew the dangers but was unable to help himself. This same theme, of the lovers being victims and unable to stop the chain of events, occurs time and again as the tale is retold.

In her *Arthurian Propaganda* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1971) Elizabeth T Pochada says "the evidence of the chronicles after Geoffrey '... ought ... to impress upon us the fact that Malory must have taken the Arthurian story seriously as the description of an actual society". She feels that Lancelot acts in a way that is highly idealized and claims that his threat to the king's private person "implies chaos for the entire realm".

Moorman says that Malory's new chivalry includes a concept of loyalty which encompasses not just Arthur's person but the whole state as well. Because it conflicts with this code the love affair *cannot* be kept secret. In Malory and in later versions Arthur is warned by Merlin that Guenevere will be unfaithful. He, too, is unable to change the pattern and weds her in all the stories despite the hint of trouble to come. In his *Development of Arthurian Romance* (New York, W W Norton & Company, 1963) Roger Sherman Loomis refers to the triangle by saying that Arthur realizes that to punish his guilty queen is to invite war.

According to Moorman the early chapters of' the *Morte* introduce the reader to a barbaric land which Arthur will transform. In the later novels Arthur tries to prevent barbarism from overtaking Britain and attempts to light a lamp in the dark. The tides that he is trying to push back are the invasions of Saxons, Jutes and Angles that eventually turned Celtic Britain into England. It is in the Celtic portions of the Island that the Legends flourished, among the Scots, the Cornish, the Welsh and also the Celtic Bretons across the Channel.

Loomis comments on the Celtic influences on the legends, assigning Irish origins to Chrétien de Troye's *Knight of the Cart.* He goes on to mention "the truly captivating charm of the Celtic tales and the incomplete satisfaction which they afford to the spirit ... everything is infused with ... the poetry of chance, irrationality and dream ... "

Those novelists who have written of Arthur in the past two decades have branched away from Malory and inserted a note of historical possibility into their plots. It has been somewhat agreed upon that Arthur was not of Malory's time, but rather of the sixth century AD. All three contain plots that have the ring of plausible truth about them. Even Merlin can be explained if one investigates the earlier pre Christian religious beliefs of Britain. Although the details may vary, all three books contain stories that might actually have taken place.

Kane and Jakes

In *Excalibur!* (New York, Dell Publishing Co, 1980) Gil Kane and John Jakes have given us a lusty novel of the Dark Ages, worthy of its paperbacked cover's promise. All the violence and sex which one expects from this type of book are here, set in the days when Arthur was trying (as usual) to hold back the Saxon tide. Merlin is a Druid and Artorius, the Bear, resides at Cam.

There is an air of mysticism and yet it could all plausibly have happened. Everything is explained and all the familiar strands are interwoven, such as Guinevere and Lancelot. Another strong theme is that of Arthur's leadership and his frantic effort to stave off the inevitable. We are told "the enemy was the darkness in them all ... the nothingness that bordered on life, waiting to demolish ... the darkness of his own soul". When he realized this, "Artorius suddenly felt infused with meaning ... 'You'll not have me without a fight ... that human kind could remember and take heart in throughout the centuries....' "

In the early days of their knowing each other Artorius speaks to Guinevere of Lancelot and says 'I do not think of either of us being great men ... we do what we must do ... we aspire only to what we *should* be ..." Arthur's sense of responsibility is the strongest part of

his makeup. Of Britain he says "Yes. This is just an island. But our caring for it makes it something more ... "

In *Excalibur!* Lancelot and Guinevere fall in love and begin their affair before her father decides to ally himself with Britain's leader through the royal marriage. Arthur is already aware of her infatuation for his handsome young soldier, of whom he says "He is my finest Captain ... I would rather lose my sword Excalibur than Lancelot."

Guinevere feels the weight of her sin and says to Lancelot, "We would destroy him and with him, this kingdom and ... a candle in the night of the world." Lancelot "worships the ideals he (Arthur) embodies". However, his worship of the King and his worship of Guinevere are two separate emotions. To her he says "Ah, Woman. Your beauty makes me weep..." and tells her "I wish I could not love". Arthur knows the truth and the royal marriage is never consummated. The traditional ending is here: the betrayal is once more the work of Arthur's son, Mordred. Guinevere enters a nunnery but it is Lancelot and not Bedivere who throws the dying Arthur's sword into the sea.

Catherine Christian

Bedivere first appeared in the early Welsh Arthurian poems. He has also been called Bedwr, and it was he who cast the sword into the Lake in Malory's story. He is the narrator in Catherine Christian's well written and carefully thought out The *Pendragon* (which was entitled *The Sword and the Flame* when it first appeared in Great Britain). Bedivere is the same age as Arthur. The future King was nursed by his mother and he has grown up adoring his leader. He becomes the most loyal of the Companions.

Arthur has the same great qualities of leadership as in the other novel and tells Bedivere that they are fighting for "a land where justice and truth and understanding replace violence and intrigue and tribal jealousy ..." Busy with his duties he sends Lancelot to escort his future bride to Camelot. This is a mistake that helps to bring about Merlin's warning "that the marriage would be star crossed from the first..." The faithful Bedivere watches them ride in together and, recognizing their beauty, tells us "I looked up at them both and my heart turned over... The harper in me recognized perfect beauty... [They were] two figures outside time ... figures in a harper's dream."

As it is through Bedivere's eyes that we first see the lovers, it is also through his intuition that we learn of the Bard's power, that power that kept alive those early legends. We are told "the breath of the god ... it comes seldom ... and then like ... the fire ... from whose spark the flame is rekindled. The flame that does not die..."

The Pendragon recognizes the boredom of his barren queen and feels his neglect of her. His indulgence goes as far as to recognize openly that she is grieving for the wounded Lancelot. Lancelot confides to Bedivere his plan to return to his native Armorica (Brittany) and in parting implores Bedivere "be kind to her", bringing forth the comment "it was the only time he ever came near speaking openly of his love for the Queen..." When Lancelot eventually returns, Bedivere's old worry is once more aroused. "Both of them were moths ... but Arthur, not they, would be the one who would be scathed."

Bedivere's worst fears for the King are realized when Guinevere flees to Armorica to join Lancelot. After being wounded, the strong war leader cries "Why did they leave me?"

Their return, which is the occasion of the King's returning health, causes the observation "no questions ... a deep, shining happiness that he needed to share".

Advancing middle age mellows the members of the court, and Arthur, says dreamily that he has had three wives "the name of each was Guinevere". This is in the happier days before the same old treachery, the same flight of the queen to a nunnery, the same loyalty of Lancelot to his King. The first person narration adds a dimension of magic to the story, familiar though some elements are, and the Bard persuades his listener to Arthur's cause.

Rosemary Sutcliff

Rosemary Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset* (Harmondsworth, Peacock 1965) is my favourite of all the Arthurian stories. So much so, in fact, that I reread it every two or three years and it never fails to bring a tear to my eye and pure enchantment to my heart.

This narrator is the aged Artos, Count of Britain at the end of his life when the Roman Legions have abandoned his Island. The role of the adulterous betrayer belongs to Bedwyr whom Artos introduces to his bride as "my sword brother and lieutenant". He has eagerly awaited bringing these two people together, unaware of any glimmer of the tragedy that will ensue. Bedwyr has already told him "If I were to desert you, I think it would be for something wore than a woman" and his impression of their meeting is that of "matching two swordsmen playing for the feel of each other's blades, but whether the foils were blunted or sharp, I could not yet be sure."

No great love has caused Artos' marriage; it is an alliance of convenience to a clan chieftain' daughter named Guenhumara. The simple vows end "my love for her contentment, my spear for the throat of the man who offers her harm. There is no more that I have to give..."

Guenhumara is younger than Artos and when she nurses Bedwyr the Harper through an illness the inevitable happens. Artos, who has grown to love his wife deeply, is long unaware of their infidelity. In fact he contentedly observes their companionship in one of the novel's homey scenes: "she would be working ... and Bedwyr sitting ... beside her and glancing up at her ... and their two shadows flung ... on the web of her weaving so that it was almost as though she were weaving them into the pattern of the cloth... I liked to watch them so, for it seemed to me good that the two people I loved best in the world should be friends and that we should be a trinity..."

The sense of trinity is strongest in this novel of people who seem very real and whose weaknesses are very human failings. Later, Artos asks Guenhumara if Bedwyr should go yet. She replies "Yes I think he should," and although Artos is "aware that we had lost the fragile contentment" he cannot begin to know why.

The tragedy gradually unfolds and of the fateful moment of revelation, Artos says simply "I knew the thing that mattered most to me in the world was that I should not see what lay behind that door."

Sutcliff's novel is probably the furthest from Malory in tone and feel. There is a quiet homespun quality about the Dun of the Count of Britain that takes away all sense of the trappings of a Medieval court. Artos speaks poetically of "silence so intense that it pressed upon the ears..." and asks Bedwyr "Did love come on you so suddenly, then?" Bedwyr's

reply is honesty itself: "I forgot that she belonged to you." Artos rationalizes to himself that "they had turned to each other, the two people I loved best in the world, and doing so, each had taken the other from me, and I was left ... betrayed..."

The problem of years falls into place all too late as Artos asks "Did you ever love me at all, Guenhumara?" and she replies, "Yes ... only we could never cross each other's thresholds." It is his hurt and his bewilderment that cause Artos to send the lovers from him. The faithful core of the Brotherhood never breaks entirely. The fight continues for the defence of Britain, despite the dreams that cause Artos to wake "with the wet feel of tears on my face..."

The novel has a semi-happy ending, for Bedwyr eventually returns to die with the Brotherhood. Artos inquires "Were you never happy to together all those years?" and Bedwyr replies "Not very." The truthful irony of the mattetr is summed up neatly for us as Artos persists "But, Bedwyr, you loved her, and she you?" He said simply "Oh, yes, we loved each other, but you were always between us...!"

Harper's Song

In all three versions Arthur is a man of integrity and humanity. Perhaps he is too preoccupied with his defence of Britain to be an ideal husband, perhaps a bit naive but always aware of his destiny and of his success in keeping the flame alive. "There will be more songs ... though it is not we who shall sing them," says Artos to Bedwyr at the very end of *Sword at Sunset*. That, after all that is said and done, is what the Matter of Britain was really all about. ☙

• *Originally titled "Harper's Song: King Arthur from* Le Morte *to the present", Elizabeth P Slater's essay first appeared in XIII/3 (Summer 1980), an issue with the theme of Patterns.*

Arthur, Merlin & Old Stones *Paul Screeton*

• *Retired journalist Paul Screeton, author of* Quicksilver Heritage *(1974), provided this item for XIV/4 (Autumn 1981), the Old Stones edition.*

Introduction

The legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table have an everlasting quality, and this can be proportioned between the exoteric factors of stirring the imagination, the noble interest in chivalry, infectious excitement, and originally and specifically for the beautiful prose; and the esoteric nuances which have reblossomed this century in Katherine Maltwood's vision of the Glastonbury terrestrial zodiac and also psychotherapy techniques utilising the legend as a motif from the archetypes of the human mind.

King Arthur appears in a multitude of topographical, archaeological and folkloric contexts throughout Britain, but we would be wise to remember that most modern historians accept Arthur's existence – not as a king – but as a Celtic cavalry leader with a swift-moving force whose mobility outmanoeuvred the Saxons and held the coming chaotic Dark Ages at bay a little while. Hence the appellation of his name to sites hoary with age before he was a twinkle in his parents' eyes must be regarded as later ages

honouring his memory by associating him with worthy structures of veneration.

The belief in an expected deliverer is common throughout Europe with King Arthur being the most prominent British candidate. Arthur is "rex quondam rexque futurus" – the Once and Future King. Such a tale appeals to the oppressed and most strongly in times of strife or perseverance. Other candidates have been or are King Harold, who supposedly escaped from the Battle of Senlac; Earl Gerald, who lies below the Rath of Lullaghast, from which he will emerge to drive out the British and unite Ireland; Roderick, last of the Goths; Don Sebastian of Spain; Welsh heroes Owen of the Red Hand and Owen Glendower; Frederic Barbarossa and other Teutonic heroes.

Twentieth-century cults regarding the certification as dead of a variety of screen idols or popular music figures as untrue and the victims actually being secretly alive yet tragically disfigured suggests there are alternatives to the hypothesis that it is oppression which nourishes belief of "heroes" in suspended animation.

The multiplicity of sites where national heroes sleep awaiting the call to lead may alternatively be interpreted as identifying locations of specific sanctity. That they have remained a keynote in our history, especially in the case of King Arthur, suggests that the national psyche has never renounced such a belief.

Arthur

In one small area of Wales are Coetan Arthur, a boulder supposedly thrown by him from Dyffryn Farm, near to Gors Fawr stone circle; Bedd Arthur, his grave; Carn Arthur; and Cerrig Meibion Arthur or the Stones of the Sons of Arthur.

As with many giant stories King Arthur too had the ill-luck to find a "pebble" in his shoe as he rode to the Battle of Camlan. He flung it seven miles and it fell on Cefn-y-Bryn, in Gower, and is known as Arthur's Stone. This stone was used by Swansea district maidens to test the fidelity of their lovers. At midnight on a full moon the girls would deposit on the stone a cake of honey and barley-meal, then crawl on hands and knees three times around it. The faithful would appear to the girls, but if they did not come the sweethearts regarded it as a token of their fickleness or intention never to marry them. It is also suggested that below Arthur's Stone is a spring flowing with the tide's ebb and flow. Another version avers that from this stone he extracted the sword Excalibur.

King Arthur is said to be buried under another Arthur's Stone, at Dorstone (Herefs) while another version says it marks the grave of another king who challenged Arthur (also that on it were made marks as King Arthur knelt praying in gratitude), and also that it marks the grave of a giant slain by Arthur (and that the marks were made by the giant's elbows as he collapsed mortally wounded).

The dolmen behind houses in the village of Darite (Cornwall) is alternatively known as King Arthur's Quoit and Trethevy Quoit.

His connection with a standing stone north of Sewingshields (Northumbd) is interesting. He was seated on a rock and an expression on Queen Guinevere's face so annoyed him that he seized a nearby 20-ton rock and threw it at her. She was seated about a quarter of a mile away and cleverly stopped it with the comb she was using. The stone was warded off and fell between the outcrops of sandstone, now known as King Crag and

Queen Crag, where they sat, and remains there to this day with its striations being the marks of the teeth of the comb. A tale very much in the giant-hurling vein. He is said to be awaiting the call both here, under ruined Sewingshields Castle, and also in the same vicinity between Allansford and Muggleswick at a location called The Sneep, and also in the Eildon Hills. Additionally, his personal Land of Nod is located under Alderley Edge hill (Cheshire), Richmond Castle (North Riding); and Craig-y-Dinas, The Fortress Rock (Caer).

Other ancient sites have been associated with various of the twelve major battles Arthur is said to have fought against the Saxons. The last of these was around 515 at Mount Badon, variously identified as Bath; Badbury Rings in Dorset; during the last century the conical eminence Freeborough Hill in the North Riding was Sir John Steven Hall's choice, and the Rev M R Graves conjectured it was nearby Eston Nab; while Badbury Hill, near Faringdon (Hants) is a further contender.

At one time King Arthur visited a mistress in Ruthin (Denbighs) when he held court at Caerwys (Flint). The troublesome Huail Caw, ruler of Edeirnion in North Wales, also deliberately pursued the woman and a fight between the suitors ensued. Arthur, though wounded in the knee, forgave Huail on condition that the injury was never again mentioned... However, when Arthur arrived dressed in disguise as a woman at a dance to see his mistress, Huail commented upon noticing the limp that Arthur dancing would be better without his "clumsy knee". Whereupon Arthur had him removed and beheaded upon Maen Huail, a large block of limestone still standing in Ruthin's market place.

A rock, Carn March Arthur (Mer), is marked by what is said to be a hoofprint of Arthur's horse, as too is the King Arthur Stone near St Columb (Cornwall), and his dog Catvall was held responsible for an impression resembling that of a dog's paw on a stone atop a cairn near Builth (Brecon). Legend asserted at the turn of the century that if anyone removed the stone it would be spirited back to the identical spot.

Merlin

Arthur's wizard Merlin is said to have erected Stonehenge. The Britons defeated the defenders of the circle on Mount Killarus Ireland, but could not move the megaliths. However, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, "and when they were all weary and spent Merlin burst out laughing and put together his own engines" and laid them down "so lightly as none would believe." And so they were brought to England.

Merlin inevitably appears elsewhere, too. In fact his name supposedly originated Marlborough by way of Merlin's Barrow, a huge chalk pyramid in the grounds of Marlborough College. A "Roman" road is diverted to avoid it. The legend on the earliest arms of Marlborough were "Ubi nunc sapientis ossa Merlin?" and Walter of Coventry as early as 1070 quoted the name of Marlborough as coming from the prehistoric monument, followed by the Domesday Book and Camden's translation of Neckham's couplet in *De Laudibus Divinae Sapientiae* of 1586: "Great Merlin's Grave | The name of Marlborough in Saxon gave."

Near the quay at Mousehole (Cornwall) is Merlin's Rock and the attack in 1595 by a Spanish fleet which burned down the village was believed to be connected with the

prophecy: "There shall land on the Rock of Merlin | Those who shall burn Paul, Penzance and Newlyn."

A prehistoric monument in the City of London, Penton mound, had an underground passage leading to Merlin's Cave. When Islington Spa was fashionable as a health resort, royalty attended. At the turn of the century the entrance, in the cellars of Merlin's Cave Tavern, was considered unsafe and bricked up.

There is also a tomb of Merlin's in the Forest of Broceliande in Brittany, and yet another on the Isle of Sein.

Merlin is reputedly buried at a point where the River Tweed is joined by a burn called Powsail, near Drumelzier (Peebles). He had been defeated by the Strathclyde Christians and eventually after many years of wandering was chased by jeering shepherds and fell to his death impaled on stakes supporting salmon nets. He is also said to be buried beneath Mynydd Fyrddyn (Merlin's Mount), Longtown (Herefs), and to lie in the bonds of enchantment by Vivien at Bardsey Island (Wales) and Merlin's Hill Cave (Carmarthen).

Conclusion

A warrior is said to be sleeping until the day when he is required to arise and march to victory under Wayting Hill round barrow, Hexton (Herts); another example of someone being awakened briefly underground relates to one of two round barrows, Tar Barrows near Cirencester (Glos), where two workmen digging a gravel pit disturbed the sleeping warrior before they escaped and falling earth blocked the entrance to the mound.

The attraction of the tale of Arthur is that it fits our tradition of salvation, resurrection and immortality, and is as great today as it was when the stories coalesced into the Matter of Britain. He may have been a military leader, but we must also see his relevance as an immortal solar hero, his twelve battles being the astrological months and his deeds related to the sun's passage through the ecliptic.

We may believe that nations have souls and that for Britain the archetype of Arthur is in truth an aspect of this. Nations' fortunes ebb and flow and this rise and fall through culture, economics,and politics is part of the psychic flow; but should serious danger threaten then the image of Arthur will be activated and allow for a rallying of the people. The rumour of a sleeping Arthur therefore is poetic, but also at a deep level is a sign of out having anthropomorphised the nation's soul. ☙

The long stone blessed by St Samson *André de Mandach*

• *Another article in the Old Stones edition, this one provided by Swiss scholar André de Mandach*

When Saint Samson arrived in Cornwall, some time after his consecration as a bishop by Saint Dyfrig/Dubricius in south-eastern Wales, he dispersed dancing crowds around a standing stone and blessed the monolith, carving out of it a cross in order to exemplify its new, Christian meaning.

Saint Samson lived for a while in the Padstow area where the ruins of a chapel remind us of his passage, as well as in St Kew on the right bank of the River Camel. Among the conversions he achieved one is described in detail: Samson dwelt at the time in the region

later called Tricurium, *ie* Petrucorium, the tract of his fellow missionary Saint Petrock whose centres of activities spread over central Cornwall. (1) In the late Middle Ages Cornwall was divided into hundreds, one of them being the Hundreds of Trigg, extending from the Padstow district of the north coast to Lostwithiel on the river Fowey, only three miles from Castle Dore crossroads. So it would be misleading to conclude from this late development that the boundaries of the Trigg/Tricurium area were the same as in c 600 when *The Life of Saint Samson* was written.

Saint Samson came upon the subjects of one count Gwedian. He converted those persons who were celebrating heathen rites about an idol on a standing stone; this idol is called *idolum* in the Latin text, and it is described as an abominable image, *simulacrum abominabile.* When Samson achieved their conversion they ashamedly smashed the idol into pieces ('lidolum penitus destruxerunt') and the holy missionary took a piece of iron and carved out of the remaining standing stone the sign of the cross ('signumque crucis quod sanctus Samson sua manu cum quodam ferro in lapide stante sculpsit ... ').Thus the pagan standing monolith, centre point of roaring bacchanals, became a holy stone.

The open question is where this incident occurred. Several Cornish antiquarians have offered suggestions. Doble, in *The Saints of Cornwall,* discusses some of the presumptive sites, but none sounds convincing, as Mr Frederick Pedler points out it was in the 'pagum quem Tricurium vocant,' and Taylor equates this with the Hundreds of Trigg. It was at the top of the hill ('vertice montis') in a forbidding region ('in sinistra parte'). Furthermore, it was in a place where a boy could drive a herd of horses at high speed ('nam puer quidem equos in cursu dirigens a quodam veloci equo ad terram cecedit') and it was by healing this boy after his fall (regarded as a miracle) that Samson converted the pagans. (2)

Nowadays boys drive herds of horses at high speed on Bodmin Moor every evening at sundown. In the sixth century many other areas were as unhampered by asphalt roads and hedges or stone fences.

What, one fancies, did Samson do after converting the pagans – including, perhaps, their count, Gwedian? No doubt he needed some place of worship to baptize them, a church where they could perform their Christian rites. Thus it is plausible to seek the standing stone bearing an ancient cross in the vicinity of an old chapel erected by Saint Samson. Now two such churches exist:

1. The church of St Samson in South Hill north-west of Callington and south of Launceston. Its standing monolith is to be found now in the churchyard – with four feet of the stone lying below ground. It is adorned with an *XP* monogram and the inscription *CUMREGNI FILI MAUCI* dating from the sixth/seventh centuries. This rock too was sanctified by a sign of Christ and used as a tombstone at the time of Saint Samson or later. The knotty point is that the sign does not represent a cross but a *XP* mark (Greek *chi-rho*). (3)

2. The alternative possibility consists of St Samson's church and cell or monastery in Golant situated one mile east of the Castle Dore crossroads. (4) Originally the tract of land south of the Castle Dore crossroads was a peninsula-boats could reach St Blazey and Treesmill in the west, the Fowey fjord forming the eastern border. Today the peninsula is

reduced to a southern part of its former area. According to James Gover, it was called Menebilly in 1582, a name which seems to go back to Menebilly, "Stone of the Colts" as Oliver Padel has suggested to me; on the authority of others (Norden 1610-12) it might originate from Meneth-Beli, "The Hill of Beli". (5) Both theories may fit here: the first refers to a standing stone connected in some way with young horses (and possibly with an event or miracle related to both the stone and the young, fast horses), the second concerns a hill where the idol of Beli or Baal stood.

Another argument ought to be brought forward: Samson did not carve an *XP* sign out of the standing stone, but he chiselled a cross. Now crosses were not common in the early Christian centuries: "We can note here,' writes Charles Thomas, "that the Cross, best known of the Christian symbols, was still viewed with some ambiguity as the manner of Christ's death and as an emblem of criminal execution – it did not become widely current in Ireland or Britain much before 600 – and that in its place we find the *chi-rho*, a monogram of the first two (Greek) capital letters in *Christos* ('the Anointed One')." (6)

The archaic sign of the cross represents a *T*, a letter called in Greek *tau*. As Hencken points out, "the T-shaped cross representing the original instrument of crucifixion appears as early as the 2nd century in the catacombs of Rome and occurs in ivories as late as the 5th century while the more familiar equal-armed cross came into fashion during the 5th and 6th centuries. It is entirely natural, however, that the older form should linger a little longer in a rather backward Christian .community in Cornwall."(7) If Saint Samson carved out such a symbol c 525-30, he probably must have chiselled a *tau* cross.

Stupendously the only standing monolith in Britain showing a *tau* is the Tristan and Isolt Stone situated precisely in the area of the church founded by Saint Samson and built for the saint by his converts. The *tau* cross is actually carved out of the stone, an extremely rare feature in central Cornwall, even in the whole British Isles. No parallel case is known. Therefore it is not very bold to suggest that the stele with the sixth century inscription mentioned above, lying in the neighbourhood of the church of St Samson, might be the genuine monolith carved by Saint Samson.

Notes

1. Joseph Loth in *Revue Celtique 35*, 1914, 295; Paul Grosjean "Vie et miracles de S Petroc" *Analecta Bollandiana 74*, 1956, 131-188 470-496; T Taylor *The Life of Saint Samson of Dol* SPCK London 1925 (Iranslations of Christian literature), 49 ch XLVIII; Robert Fawtier *La Vie de saint Samson...* Paris 1912 edition (ch 48)
2. Letter of F Pedler to C Bristow, Oct 26 1978, 2
3. Nikolaus Pevsner *The Buildings of England: Cornwall* 2nd ed rev by Enid Radcliffe, Penguin 1977, 214
4. Arthur Langdon *Old Cornish Crosses* Truro 1896; H O'Neill-Hencken *The Archaeology of Cornwall and Scilly* Methuen, London 1932, 227; T F G and Henry Dexter *Cornish Crosses, Christian and Pagan* Longmans and Green, London & Toronto 1935, 166
5. James Gover *The Placenames of Cornwall* (Typescript, Truro Museum) ; conversation with O Padel, April 4, 1978 ; R Morton Nance *A Cornish-English Dictionary* The Cornish Language Board (Truro) 1976, 33b: *"ebol*, m pl *-bylyon, -billy*, colt. Foal, small mow"
6. Charles Thomas *Britain and Ireland in Early Christian Times AD 400-800* Thames & Hudson, London 1971, 144p, 74 figs 53-56; T Taylor *The Celtic Christianity of Cornwall* 1916 M W Bartlet and R P G Hanson; *Christianity in Britain: 300-700* Leicester 1968
7. Hencken *op cit* 227

The cover to XV/2 (Spring 1982) entitled "Amazing Grails", a typical design by Kate Pollard, combining elements of a medieval chalice, Celtic spirals and a Cretan labyrinth and reflecting the varied contributions to that issue

The Alternative Dig Report *Kate Pollard*

• *Kate's antidote to official excavation reports appeared in XV/1 (Winter 1981-2).*

You might well be forgiven, gentle reader, for having forgotten who's doing this dig and why (if you never knew, mark here □ : is it the call of the wild, the urge to boldly dig where no man has split trowels before or merely because Benidorm is over-booked these days, and where is Llanelen, anyway?

Our first visit was at Easter 1973, three of us, peering at a pile of stones on a hill overlooking the estuary to the NE of the Gower peninsula. Reputedly it was an ancient cell and we had long been interested in Celtic saints, particularly Welsh ones, as we only had one car per society then (one and a half now). It had also figured in the dream of its new owner as a holy place where some treasure was to be found.

We spent most of the subsequent night in the car sheltering from a violent thunderstorm, and, intrigued, planned to return. We did, as a team, in the summer. Several members found the place and after "the worst storms in living memory", two nights in a barn, and several ruined tents later, returned to Bristol, still intrigued.

Others may experience a sense of cosmic fulfilment in such circumstances. The Pendragon Society however just hates being cold and wet and having soggy muesli. So we only returned to the lure of a watertight farmhouse for the next few years.

However, its demolition and our obstinacy forced us back to the hillside, transported in a series of vans, ranging from Hilti to Chipperfields, like some frenetic roadshow. Diggers have joined (and left). What used to be called the "Task Force" still staggers there ribaldly, year by year, to dig, dry sleeping bags, swelter, walk crookedly back from the pub along the marsh road at dead of night, and to play the word association game: "Llanelen" – "Heat" – "Flies" – "Carruthers" – "Cheese" (Cheese?).

More important questions than dating and identification remain unanswered. What is the species of the Nickelodeon bird who sings [*soh-la-soh-la-soh-la*]? Who is it living in the east wall of the chancel? What makes the coloured sparks fly up from the marsh banks at night when you rub your feet on the grass? Who is nesting in the garbage bag? Why does my stomach ache with laughter all week? (*This is a serious dig, you know, Madam, not just a holiday for you and your children.*)

Every year has been the last year. This year was the last year too (twice). Greetings and thanks to our visitors but chiefly to our new found friends who came to dig: the Nevins, Jon, Hazel, Graham II, Richard and Steven and specially to Farmer Love who lent his lovely swimming pool to a derelict group of, dirty and heat-stricken diggers. Next year will probably be the last dig too, and the next. ☙

The Stone Men of Gower *Patricia Villiers-Stuart*

I happened to be told such a strange story about the Gower Peninsula the other day that I'll relate it just in case it has anything to do with your area.

It seemed to start with a boy miner who had a dream about finding treasure under a yew tree. Eventually he left the mines and became relatively well off as some kind of

trader. He decided to buy the place of his dream. He went there and found it was for sale but the yew tree was partially burnt, the owner explained that he thought it was getting in the way and he had tried to burn it down but it wouldn't burn properly. The man bought the field or area, I'm not sure of size, and digging around the yew tree he came across a group of little stone men sitting in little stone chairs!

Of course it may be all a fantasy of the woman who told the story, it was supposed to have happened quite recently. ☙

Editor's note [1982]: *This is an example of oral folklore in action! Some readers may recognise in distorted form the background to our Pendragon dig at Llanelen. The landowner [Don Howells] for example certainly has links with coal and acquired the land much as the story says. The yew tree is still there but burnt and dead, a fungus Sulphur Polyporus growing in overlapping shelves in the hollow trunk. In its heyday it was a notable landmark – yews were grown close to churches in Ireland from at least the 8th century and in England and Wales after the Conquest (a 600 year old yew grows by St Illtyd's Church in Ilston, Gower). There is only one damaged stone in the shape of a chair under the Llanelen yew, but no stone men unfortunately.*

At nearby Llanrhidian there is a traditional story told which may have supplied some elements of the Llanelen tale: "The Iron Door of Llanrhidian". Somewhere around Llanrhidian "is a cellar full of money, blocked by an iron door ... Once upon a time a learned priest discovered in an old book (some versions say in a dream) where the cellar was and how to open it ... He sent into the woods and found the great door in a cleft in the limestone. The door opened to a certain tune on the harp... Two terrifying gnomes guarded two large heaps of gold. The harp music was lulling them to sleep ..." But although the priest's manservant extracted two handfuls of gold, the greedy priest allowed the iron door to slam shut and the rest of the treasure was lost (Roger Jones Gower Fact & Fable *page 19).*

Mr J P Tucker tells us that he lives only three or four hundred yards west of the caravan site (so he can see what's going on!). "The old farmers living at Gwernhaulog below the caravan site used to stack the hay on the flat south of the yew tree and never fenced off the yew tree, but they always picked any branches from the ground. They used to say that it was the partly dried leaves that did the damage and I never heard of them losing any stock ... "

• *Patricia's note, in XV/1, followed on from "The Alternative Dig Report". She was married to the renowned sculptor Oscar Nemon and had three children, Falcon, Aurelia and Electra; one of her grandsons is called Pendragon. She died in 1998 aged 88, having contributed several items to the journal ranging from labyrinths to a play attributed to Shakespeare.*

Webster's Glossary of Archaeological Terminology *Roger Dave Webster*

• *This was Roger's riposte to po-faced archaeological types, also in XV/1.*

Arthurian: Early Post Roman
Anomaly: Strange one this! Anomaly is the term used by scientific surveyors (resistivity *etc*) to describe the thing they are looking for. What has never been explained to the satisfaction of archaeologists is why the thing you are looking for and confidently expect to find at a given site should be described as anomalous!

Burnt layer: Burnt layer.
Cave: There is no cave under South Cadbury Castle (official).
Dig: Affectionate term for the "excavation"; never used to refer to any form of physical activity, which the experienced archaeologist avoids at all costs.
Desecration: Term used to describe the activities of other archaeologists.
Director: The one looking over your shoulder when you have failed to notice a particularly important find; may be recognised by the fact that he has no trowel in the back pocket and carries a clipboard.
Excavation: See *Dig*.
Entrance: Used to describe any doorway, break in the wall, dip in the rampart *etc*.
Exit: There are no exits recorded anywhere on any archaeological site in the UK.
Find: The process of recovering items of historical interest. Be careful what you say! On sites rich in Romano British pottery comments like, "I say I've found a bit of Romano-British pottery!" or "My Goodness! Here's another bit of Roman British pottery" are borne with an air of resigned bitterness.
Get off my land! Always be sure to obtain the owner's permission before commencing work.
In situ: Couldn't budge it!
Just in case: Real meaning of the term "Exploratory".
Mortimer: Deity said to have been seen on Cadbury amongst other places.
No significance: Term applied to material of another period discovered on site, as in "This Romano- Celtic village is of no significance; what we're looking for is an Iron Age Hill Fort – get that bulldozer over here!"
Occupation level: Floor.
Posthole: Hole for a post.
Quite useful: Term used by the director to describe surveys (resistivity *etc*) the workings of which he doesn't understand (see *Very Useful*).
Robber trench: Trench where a wall used to be. These turn up with miraculous regularity when there isn't a wall where the director thinks there ought to be one.
Small find: Anything small enough to fit into a finds tray. When you have collected enough small stone cubes of various colours to fill several trays, take them to the director and he will say, "My Goodness, you have discovered a Greco-Roman mosaic and you have dug it all up before we had a chance to see it!" or words to that effect!
Spoil heaps: The spoil heap is the place where all the earth from the site is dumped. Spoil heaps make directors nervous and diggers should avoid them at all times when the director is present. Comments like "I say, what's this Greco-Roman vase full of *dinarii* doing on the spoil heap?" are not generally welcome!
Stratified: Applied to anything discovered in the right occupation level (see *Wormage*).
Taunton: Home of the mythical CADBURY/CAMELOT exhibition.
Trowel: Trowels are worn at all times in the back pocket: on no account should they be used for digging.
Unstratified: Found in the spoil heap.
Very useful: Term used by director to describe expensive surveys (aerial *etc*) the workings of which he doesn't understand.
Wormage: Worms carry a heavy responsibility – if it weren't for worms, all history books would need to be rewritten. Wormage is the term applied to any item found in the wrong occupation level. cg

The Bear of Berne *Adrian Vye*

• *Another contribution, in XV/4 (Autumn 1982), on links with bears in Arthurian lore. Adrian is currently head of J K Rowling's former primary school in Winterbourne, South Gloucestershire.*

During the summer I travelled to Switzerland, an unlikely place to find anything remotely associated with Arthur *et al*. However, a remote link I did find in the Berne Museum.

In that provincial town of a capital city they all seem to have a fixation about bears. This is due to the old bear pits which made Berne famous. Today the reminders of the medieval pastime of bear baiting include a concrete-lined pit, where about a dozen bears reside living amply well off tourist sympathy, and the Bernese coat of arms with a bear on them. However the symbol of the bear to them is like Britannia, Arthur, bulldogs *etc* are to us. They go crazy over any link they could possibly establish with a bear. When on the 16th May 1832 a vegetable plot was being cleared of antique wall foundations in the Rev J R Ris' garden, a bronze vignette of a bear with a seated woman and tree was found amongst twenty other bronze articles, and this was destined years later to have a prominent position in the foyer of the museum.

They were identified as Gallo-Roman. I had never known that bears featured largely in Roman religion. Fortunately the museum provided an English information sheet concerning the bronzes (I wonder how many British museums provide information in German?). It appears that through a process of slow reconstruction the four constituents of the vignette (base, seated figure, tree and bear) were pieced together as originally they were thought to be, and the bear was identified as a bear, not a hippopotamus or a Great Dane. Amazingly a process of clue solving led Swiss historians to recognise the seated figure as Artio, the goddess of fertility (from the Latin verb *artire*, to graft). A lawyer/historian, J J Bachofen, in 1863 recognised the link between the Latin Artio and the Greek *arktos*. As we all know, *arktos* means bear, and thus they surmised that the human figure represented the humanised bear symbol of fertility. Likewise the Celtic stem word *arto* also means bear.

However, controversy remains concerning the identity of the goddess. Was she a Gallo-Roman representation of the Celtic fertility goddess; a hunting and forest goddess, or the pre-Celtic goddess of water and springs; or just a common or garden Roman representation of Artemis?

I decided to find out more about Artemis. It transpires that the virgin goddess was a development of the fertility goddess. A paradox weakly resolved in that the new-born are chaste. However, another paradox of her duties in the pantheon is that she is the bringer of death to woman (her brother Apollo doing his bit for the men). In Brauron (her chief cult centre in Attica) her priestesses dressed as bears. Again a link is formed with Artemis the fertility goddess and the bear as totem of fertility in the myth of Callisto. Callisto, a chaste

handmaiden of Artemis (as all her handmaidens had to be) was raped by that delinquent, Zeus. Although poor Callisto seems innocent of her actions, the loss of her innocence caused her to be changed into a bear and eventually shot by Artemis the huntress. In remorse Artemis made Callisto (along with another of her regrettable acts, Orion) into a constellation.

I hear you say, what has this to do with Arthur? Arthur's name has also been rumoured to come from the Greco Celtic root meaning the bear. Could he in fact have been a vague folk memory of a fertility goddess? Could Lancelot, his right hand man, have been a reflection of the chastity of a newborn babe, the outcome of fertility? A point that has always fascinated me is why did Arthur have no offspring by Guinevere? Mordred, his only son, was by his sister, a follower of magic arts, associated with the moon. Interestingly, the moon is also a symbol of fertility and likewise a divine capacity of Artemis the moon goddess. Could this be the real meaning of the incestuous relationship in that fruit is born out of the goddess of virginity and fertility, an unacceptable practicality and an unacceptable practice?

Like all myths and religions, Arthur and his connection with the real world of the Dark Ages up to today are not meant to be simply explained by any formula. When I went to see *The Marvels of Merlin* performed by the Green Branch in Bristol (a most excellent and enjoyable evening) I was struck by the feeling that Arthur and all other myths are so kaleidoscopic in meanings and interpretations. We are obviously not dealing with a simple fairy story in Arthur, but a profound and epic statement on all the facets of life. What an eternal tribute to the human intellect to produce a mythology so subtle and varied, so that it is as poignant today as it was a millennium ago. ☙

Sources Berne Historical Museum "Small Special Exhibition in the Entrance Hall of the Museum" Spring–Summer 1982, 11

M Grant and J Hazel *Who's Who in Classical Mythology*

E Tripp *The Handbook of Classical Mythology*

The Riothamus Riot *P K Johnstone*

• *Paul Karlsson Johnstone was a Consulting Archaeologist from St Louis, Missouri, contributing this response to Geoffrey Ashe's theory for XVII/2 (Spring 1983).*

Why have the directors of Debrett's Peerage commissioned an all star posse *comitatus*, headed by Geoffrey Ashe (a very good choice) to look into the historical basis of the Arthurian legend?

And why have they chosen, as their main effort, to identify Arthur with the fifth-century British leader Riothamus, who, very late in life, became King of Kerneo (Cornovia) in Brittany?

Considering the well known genealogical bent of Debrett, this suggests an attempt to construct a pedigree reaching from King Arthur forward to the present day. This is not, in itself, at all preposterous. While Arthur had three sons, all of whom died very young, without issue, he also had one daughter, named Arthfedd, "Bear Princess," who married a Powysian cattle baron (not a member of the royal *hoch-gestalt*) and certainly had several

children, none of whom are ever reported as migrating to Brittany.

The name of Arthfedd's husband, by the way, was Llawfrodedd Farfog Coch, L Red Beard. Is he to be identified with Launcelot du Lake? I do not know.

But I do know that any attempt to link up any eleventh- or twelfth-century Breton baron with King Riothamus will encounter almost insuperable obstacles, for there was a period in the tenth century when "Norman" (Danish) invaders had killed or driven out all but the *pauperes Brittones*. Many of the displaced nobles found refuge in Wessex.

(Did King Aethelstan know that his own ancestor, Cerdic, was a Briton or half Briton as his name proves? King Alfred, Aethelstan's grandfather, showed no knowledge of it in any of his surviving work. But Alfred was a great king and a skilled diplomat. Such men seldom tell quite all they know. And Alfred did select as his biographer a South Welsh bishop, Asser of St Davids.)

The Bretons who recovered Brittany *c* 950 did not represent all the earlier *mactigern* lines. Nor is this the worst obstacle. The French Revolutionists of 1789ff in burning title deeds did irreparable damage to Breton history.

But let us suppose that Debrett's, by some lucky discovery, aided by a generous dollop of that simple faith which Tennyson recommended as superior to Norman (or Breton) blood, succeed in constructing a pedigree complete across fifteen centuries, from today to the *floruit* of Riothamus, all their labour will be wasted. Why? *Because Riothamus demonstrably was not Arthur.*

How can I be sure of this? A reasonable question deserving an answer, but it cannot be given in full here. I can only attempt a hurried summary.

Arthur

As I established in 1962[1] Arthur won his climactic victory in the spring of AD 503. Born about 460, he ruled the wreck of what had been Roman Britain until 524. These results were published in what was then the foremost archaeological periodical in the Western world. Their publication brought me a deluge of congratulatory mail, to which I was unable to reply, as I was near death. My recovery was extremely slow *but complete*. Now my results are questioned – by myself, among others.

This is very good. No "authority" is good enough to stand against truth. For instance, I had dated the obit of Hengest AD 467 (*ASC* 488, with the normal twenty one year correction). But the *Saxon Chronicle* does not say that Hengest died in 488. It says that Aesc, probably his son, reigned in Kent for 24 years. 24 subtracted from 488 leaves 464, which *may* be correct.) But the true date of Hengest's death is 457, and its place the hilltop in SE Cornwall called *Hengestesdun*, now Hingston Down.

But otherwise, the chronology which I established in 1962 stands vindicated. Not everyone will believe that – nor should they. But I do have some rather well known historians in complete agreement with me on this point. I will cite only two – Sir Ifor Williams (*Dictionary of Welsh Biography*) and Sir Winston Churchill (*The Birth of Britain*). You could look it up.

[1] P K Johnstone "A Consular Chronology of Dark Age Britain" *Antiquity* March 1962, 102-9

Riothamus

Now, how does this conclusively disprove the equation Riothamus = Arthur? For a detailed exposition I will refer anyone sufficiently interested to two multi-volume works of the Reverend Sabine Baring Gould: *Lives of the Saints* and *Lives of the British Saints* (with John Fisher).[2] In these volumes Baring Gould has collected all that the fires of *c* 900 and 1789 have left of genuinely early Breton material, other than Geoffrey of Monmouth's "British book", which occasionally finds the confirmation it always needs. (And incidentally, Vicomte Hersart de Villemarqués *Barsaz Breiz*, long scornfully rejected as spurious – but not by me – is now winning acceptance as genuine. I will not dwell on that, as the *Barsaz* does not mention Riothamus.)

Riothamus was no minor figure. He fought the Visigoths in central Gaul from 464 to 470. His army is said to have been 12,000 strong – and it came from "the Ocean", that is from Britain. After he lost the battle of Déols to Euric he retreated to Burgundy (around Geneva) then back to Quimper – and Euric did not follow him. Riothamus was still dangerous. We do not know the year of his death, but, since he must have been born *c* 400, some sixty years before Arthur, there can be no question of their identity.

One of Riothamus' sons was St German of Man (a namesake of Germanus of Auxerre) who died in 474. And a grandson, Budic, died in 509, and Budic's son Riuold, exiled to Britain, returned to Armorica in 512. Another great grandson of Riothamus who also appears as Rhedyw (for *Rhedyf) and Ian (John) Reith is St Illtud of Llancarfan, who retired about 510. He was the son of Bicanys, son of Aldor, son of Riothamus. Still another descendant, St Laudus of Coutances, died in 568. He was the son of Alan Fergant (*not* the contemporary of William the Conqueror), son of Emyr Llydaw, son of Aldor son of Riothamus.

Which serves to firmly establish the fact that Riothamus was born somewhen near AD 400.

Ambrosius

Here I would like to "put in" a very recent quotation from Kenneth Jackson of Edinburgh University, my mentor in Brittonic philology when he was at Harvard. Jackson writes: "...Mistakenly treating a Celtic name as a title has recently caused some surprise – Leon Fleuriot's theory (*Les Origines de la Bretagne: L'émigration*, Paris 1980 pp 170-73) that the fifth century Breton leader Riothimus or Riothamus (standing probably for late British *Rigotamos) was none other than his British contemporary, and that Fleuriot's *Ambrosius Aurelianus rigotamos* means 'Ambrosius the Supreme King' or 'the Super King'. The refutation of this is largely a matter of the reliability of the historical sources used, and may be left to historians, but the philological reason why it is impossible is that *Rigotamos does not mean 'Supreme King' but 'Most Kingly, Most Royal', a personal *name.*"[3]

Is there a connection between Ambrosius and Riothamus? Almost certainly. They were

[2] 4 vols, *Cymmrodorion* 1912-15 with an excellent index.

[3] In *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* No 3, Summer 1982, p 38 note 43.

not identical. Ambrosius, last of the Romans of Britain, whose ancestral estates were in Hants, Wilts and Dorset, at the end of a war lasting a decade, defeated, captured and executed Hengest Wihtgilsing of Kent in 457, then marched to London and held a great feast there. He could then rather easily have recovered Kent – but he did not. Why?

He really was a Roman at heart, and Romans – Aegidius and Syagrius – were still battling the Visigoths for the mastery of Gaul and the Western Empire. He *sent* his most experienced Dux, Riothamus, with 12,000 of his best troops, overseas to Gaul. In 464 Riothamus met the Goths in a major battle and beat them, killing Frederic, brother of King Euric. It will have been Ambrosius' plan for Riothamus to then re-embark for Britain.

But the prospect of an independent kingdom had gone to the head of Riothamus. He stayed on – not unsuccessfully, for he left the kingdom of Kerneo to his children. But the greater plan, for the re-establishment of the Western Empire, foundered – and Kent remained Saxon, for the loss of 12,000 fighting men left Ambrosius crippled.

Riothamus was a Cornovian from Central Wales, therefore a distant, and very much older, cousin of Arthur. From 368 onward, the Irish of Munster had swarmed over the West Country. In the days of Owain Vinddu, of Vortigern and Ambrosius, adventurers from Cornovia were recovering Dumnonia. There was Custennin Gernyw, Constantine the Cornovian and his numerous sons – Gorlois, the historical father of Arthur was one of them. No, they did not give Cornwall its name, which is much older.

Dating

Enough of that. One other point needs clearing up – the *precise* date of Arthur. In 1962 I fixed the date of his victory at Badon by its Roman, consular date. I stand by that but there are other ways of arriving at the same result. I will mention just one.

The 27th King of Pictland, Drust II *Gurthinmoch* reigned from 465 to 495. He is the *Gurthmwl Wledig, unpen o Prydyn* (I do not have space or time for all the evidence now, but it exists) who in 495 marched south with Arthur, only to be killed in a wayside brawl. He was buried near Loughor, and Arthur, by a great effort of diplomacy, was able to win over the Picts to continue the campaign and so to win the battle of Caerleon-on-Usk, flinging Eossa Great Knife back across the Severn.

That was the prelude to Badon.[4] ☙

The Folklore of Badbury Rings *Jeremy Harte*

• *Jeremy, a respected folklorist, was an occasional contributor and strong supporter of Pendragon, as this item (from XVI/2) suggests. He is curator of Bourne Hall Museum in Surrey and 2005 winner of the Katherine Briggs Folklore Award for his book* Explore Fairy Traditions.

Badbury Rings is a large multivallate hill in the parish of Shapwick near Wimborne Minster in Dorset. It lies on a slight slope, and the three ditches are broadly spaced for effective protection against the sling stone artillery of the late Iron Age; the name

[4] Pictish Chronicle in H M Chadwick *Early Scotland* Cambridge 1949, p 11; *Black Book of Caermarthen*, Englynion y Beddeu ("Stanzas of the Graves")

Vindogladia (White Ditches, referring to the appearance of freshly dug chalk) appears in the Antonine Itinerary, and suggests that at the time of the Roman Conquest it was a fairly recent construction. The fort must have been one of those taken by Vespasian in his original campaign, and became a Roman camp overlooking the road system of eastern Dorset.

Four roads align on the edges of the fort, including the important Old Sarum–Dorchester route; they are sighted towards it over the plain, but the alignments do not continue through the fort. The road systems do not fit in with the distribution of Bronze Age sites in the district, or with probable routes among the Buzbury Spettisbury group of hillforts, and are a straightforward piece of Roman engineering.

Occupation of the site probably continued through the Romano-British period; it is the natural centre from which to organise the defence of the main route to the west. Two earthworks (Bokerley Dyke to the north east and Coombs Ditch to the south west) were either constructed or strengthened from 350 to 400 as part of a defensive scheme; they do not appear to have been sacked, but are disused after this period.

Badon

Badbury Rings was first identified as the Mons Badonicus of Gildas by E Guest in 1883; the association was made on purely philological grounds (Badbury appears in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle as *Baddan byrig*), but became a popular Arthurian localisation, at least among Dorset scholars. Although this identification has been supported by Kenneth Jackson in the *Journal of Celtic Studies* (2 p152) its proofs have grown weaker with time. The comparison of the names is made less impressive by the numerous other cases of *Badda* names for hillforts in Wessex, and the archaeology of the Anglo Saxon conquest suggests that the English were nowhere near Dorset in 500. The basis of the West Saxon kingdom seems to have been on the upper Thames, including Somerset in several campaigns after Dyrham, and only then (perhaps the 7th century) absorbing Dorset/Durotrigia in a single move; thus Badon should be looked for in the mid-West, and Michael Wood's suggestion of Liddington Castle at Badbury near Swindon is as good as any.

It has been suggested (chiefly by Ekwall in the *Dictionary of English Placenames*) that the Badda after whom this hill is named is a legendary hero associated with forts. There are three other instances of the name applied to camps, and the use of a repeated name for archaeological sites is familiar from other contexts *eg* Maiden Castle, Robin Hood's Butts. Apart from a proposed connection with OE *beadu* 'war', and the similarity to the equally shady *Cada* of the Cadbury forts, we know nothing of the supposed hero. The connection with the Irish war goddess Badb is romantic and untenable.

Raven

The Arthurian connection seems to have led to a new belief about the site. In 1909 the Dorset ornithologist R Bosworth Smith wrote a description of a boyhood expedition to the fort some twenty years before, in which he had found a raven's nest; and, expanding on the theme referred to the Cornish belief that it was unlucky to shoot ravens, since King Arthur had returned as one of these birds – a superstition recorded in the 19th century and

also found (attributed to the English) in Cervantes' Don Quixote. These two references had been brought together in *Notes and Queries*, and remain the only authorities for the Arthur-as-raven belief. Bosworth Smith, in poetic mood, suggested that Badbury would be an appropriate place to see the kingly bird.

Subsequently, in the popular folklore and guidebook literature, this fancy has been repeated as a genuine tradition – which of course it now is: "The victorious Arthur reappears on the anniversary of the battle every year since those stirring days, in the shape of a raven. He flies about croaking his satisfaction as he surveys the scene of his triumph, then off he flies to reappear the following year" (Collman, *Hants & Dorset Folklore* p 22). The most recent account speaks of "a black raven ghost", and it seems that the Arthurian image is being assimilated to motifs like the annual visit and the return to old haunts, which are common in Dorset ghost tradition.

Ghosts!

Badbury is also the home of two *bona fide* ghosts. An old warrior with a twisted leathery face, gashed with wounds, creeps up on people after dark; another source speaks of his appearing to courting couples. The last sighting was in the autumn of 1977. The *Dorset Evening Echo* of 19 January 1979 interviewed a woman who had been walking on the site in the afternoon with her husband; he looked back and saw, standing on top of one of the banks, a lady in a long black coat, buttoned up to the front, who was wearing a hat in Edwardian style. He turned round to say to his wife that they should help her down; but when they returned to the area they found no such lady.

Both these ghosts are interesting in view of the popularity of the Rings among Blandford and Wimborne people as a centre for day outings, picnics and so on. The haggard warrior ghost who frightens the modern visitor is perhaps a projection of historical musings on the fort, comparing its origins with its present tameness: the past is scary. The Black Lady, by contrast, is a realistic ghost, since little old ladies are quite common at the site on a warm afternoon. Of course this is not to discard a parapsychological approach to the haunting – the possibility of a dressed up joker on the one hand, and the parallel with attacks on courting couples by UFOs and bigfeet on the other.

Coffins

The Dorset Field Club, on a visit to Badbury in 1889, [was] told of the tradition of a golden coffin buried between the Rings and Shapwick village: "What a prize for the Dorset Museum" someone said. Frederick Treves in 1906 supposed that the coffin was buried in the fort itself, but this is probably a simplification of the original account.

One of the Roman roads runs through Shapwick, and it is possible that the legend refers to a Roman settlement beside this, like the villa excavated two miles to the north at Hemsworth: elsewhere, at Winterborne Kingston, there was a legend of a gold coffin buried in the parish which was confirmed by the discovery of a Roman sheet lead coffin.

Trees

The popularity of Badbury for excursions has led to a rapid increase in beliefs about the

avenues of trees planted on either side of the road from Wimborne. In fact these were planted by William John Bankes of Kingston Lacy in 1835. When surveyed in 1973, there were 374 trees to the north and 364 to the south, with 18 gaps which have subsequently been replaced.

The essential tradition is that there is a tree for every day of the year, although in fact there are too many on the north, and probably the south, for this to work. A more perceptive variant says that there are 365 on one side, 366, for a leap year, on the other.

They are variously supposed to have been planted by prisoners of war; as a memorial to soldiers who fell at Waterloo; to mark the death of a farmer's son in World War I; and to record the one year of happiness which Bankes enjoyed with his wife before she died. One informant was certain that they concealed a cache of sovereigns: "Ther'm yeller boys unner en".

These beliefs are part of an interest in trees as landmarks, developed in response to the local tourism of the last few decades: the avenues around Dorchester are attributed to Napoleonic prisoners of war, and the beech clump on Chactonbury Ring in Sussex has a group of stories, including the remembering of a dead wife. I think most people's reaction to something odd in the landscape is to suppose that it commemorates someone. ☙

Sources

Name of site: *EPNS Dorset* (2 p 177). The raven and the ghosts: Edmund Waring's *Ghosts and Folklore of Dorset* p 53; Philip Shaw in *Coaster 12* p 5. The gold coffin: *Dorset Proceedings 11* p 20; Grinsell's *Folklore of Prehistoric Sites*. Roman roads: *Dorset Proceedings X* p 127 and *9* p 147. The trees: *Dorset Countryside 2* viii p 33, 1977; *Dorset 100* p 32, 1982.

Glastonbury, Wells and Wookey *Sid Birchby*

• *In* The Avalonian Guide *(8th edition 1839) the north-east corner of the abbey ruins was "called THE HAUNTED CORNER, from an ancient tradition still prevalent, relating to an ABBOT'S HEAD, and implying that supernatural sounds, resembling the roaring of a furnace, are frequently heard in a recess ... In the year 1792, when the ground ... was levelled, a free-stone coffin was discovered ... just beneath the recess before mentioned, containing a skeleton, entire, EXCEPTING THE SKULL... A hollow roaring sound, resembling the reverberations of a conch shell, may still occasionally be heard in the recess." This may or may not have a bearing on the first paragraph of this article, from XVII/1 (Winter 1983-4).*

The essence of Glastonbury lies in its sombre history as the scene of an ancient crime. When Henry 8th despoiled its Benedictine abbey in 1539, the severed head of the last abbot was impaled over the gateway as a visible sign that spiritual power was in new hands, and indeed the crime was much more than judicial murder. Richard Whiting died on the Tor with two of his monks in a blasphemous parody of Calvary, sacrificial victims of a brutal Closing Ritual for the age of faith. Thenceforth, the monarch was to be the spiritual arbiter.

Small wonder that, to some people, the town feels burnt out, as if it has lost its soul. Countless attempts to breathe new life into old ashes have failed to produce any flames but at the most a few gleams of esoteric light, short-lived, thin and bodiless, with an eerie astral look about them. "The place has got a very odd (and to me, unpleasant) atmosphere.

Too many people have tried to perform rites there, and the aura is very confused and nasty these days" (the editress of *Quest* in a personal letter, 1972).

The enormity of the crime! Glastonbury is possibly the site of the first Christian church in England, whether or not the Joseph of Arimathea legend is true, for there were certainly Christians in late Romano-British times elsewhere (the Roman villa at Lullingstone in Kent has a Christian chapel) and the town was a focal point of Irish missionary work in the post-Roman period. In a 9th century text, it is called "Glastimber of the Goidels" (*ie* Irish) and several Irish saints, including St Patrick, are reputedly buried there. There is, in short, good reason to think that Glastonbury was a Christian holy place in Roman times, and possibly the earliest one in Britain.

But the Celtic version of Christianity was not that of Rome. When St Augustine landed on the Isle of Thanet in 596, to convert the heathen (and vigorously propelled from the rear by Pope Gregory) he found that he also had to contend with a native Church claiming to be older and holier than his own. Ultimately, the Roman creed won the struggle. The records talk of trivialities such as the date of Easter and how monks should shave their heads, but the differences were never fully resolved. To this day, Glastonbury is a covertly Celtic town which in the past was never fully orthodox in its religious beliefs, and it has paid the price.

Wells

Things are different down the road at Wells, where a certain Bond Street style to its shopping centre contrasts painfully with Glastonbury's faintly seedy image. Wells is up-market, as the estate-agents' prices show, and its tourists are richer. Wells is fat-cat in the sense of Braga in Northern Portugal, another prosperous, conservative and Church-dominated city, and even more so. In Braga, the Church owns most places of entertainment, including the cinemas.

The key assets of Wells are that it has a cathedral and is a city, two status-symbols which are due to a religious alliance with the influential city of Bath. Its bishop is the bishop of *Bath* and Wells. One dividend has been that Henry 8th's asset-strippers left the cathedral alone and that the collective spirit of place has survived and thrived.

The earliest historical record of Wells says that King Ina of Wessex built a church there in 704 and brought four priests from Glastonbury to hold the services. Apparently, there was no existing Christian community and perhaps no civil one. His church was near a spring now called St Andrew's Well which may well have been a pagan site with a few custodians, but otherwise Wells as an inhabited place does not seem to have an earlier history.

The transplant was successful. Divine service has been held on this site ever since, without a break, and Wells has not had the traumatic breaks in its collective psyche that Glastonbury experienced.

Schisms

Perhaps the new start away from religious schisms made all the difference. Glastonbury tried to break away from its Celtic past, but failed miserably. When the ancient wattle church of St Joseph was (conveniently) burnt down in 1184, the Benedictines rebuilt their

abbey. It fell in 1539, as we have seen. The church on the Tor dedicated to St Michael was wrecked in 1275 by a severe earthquake. Something went wrong.

We need not assume divine displeasure, although it's a nice idea. In the 12th century, King Henry 2nd encouraged what we now term Arthuriana as a political move against his French feudal overlord, and one result was the alleged discovery at Glastonbury of the tomb of Arthur and Guinevere. This was possibly a monkish device to attract pilgrims and money for the building projects after the 1184 fire (see Leslie Alcock's *Arthur's Britain*) and "the first step to further claims about Joseph and the Grail". Yet such claims had existed for a long time and if the Abbots chose to endorse them, it was at their own risk. The tales of Arthur, Joseph, the Grail and the Holy Thorn all imply that Britain was Christian long before Augustine arrived, which of course it was. But they were schismatic and by encouraging them the abbotry sealed its own fate. Politically unreliable: guilty by association.

Wookey Hole

Like Wells, Glastonbury had its pre-Christian holy spring, now called the Chalice Well, where some say the Grail was hidden for a time. There is little to say about the spring's early history, whereas the neighbourhood of Wells, though not the town itself, is mentioned in early records. The pre-Christian centre for the district was some 5 km distant at Wookey Hole, well-known to modern tourists for its caverns, and also to earlier visitors. If you had lived under the Roman Empire and also been in Britain you would probably have visited the Great Cave of Wookey, given the chance, and thrown a coin into its waters. The late Dr H E Balch of Wells Museum, with whom I have worked, found coins dated between 120 BC and 392 AD, which spans most of the Romano-British period, allowing for some meanie with his ancient *denarius* dated much earlier.

The main cave at Wookey must have been on the Empire tourist route, for the 2nd-century scholar Clement of Alexandria wrote: "Those who have composed histories say that in Britain is a certain cave at the side of a mountain, and at the entrance, a gap. When the wind blows into the cave and is drawn on into the bosom of the interior, a sound is heard as of the clashing of numerous cymbals." Such noises, though more like the "water-hammer" in domestic plumbing, occur in Wookey Cave and nowhere else in Britain, so far as I know.

In the cave lived a witch whom Arthur slew, or at least Wookey is the most likely place (see the legend of *Kulhwch and Olwen*). A fragment in the *Black Book of Carmarthen* expands the story:

"Though Arthur was playing, | the blood was dripping, | a-fighting with a hag;
He slew Pen-Palach | in Awarnach's hall, | in the tasks of Dissethach."

Alas for legend! The bones of Wookey's witch, now in Wells Museum, are those of a young woman who died *ca* 400 AD. Nearby were found two stalagmitic bosses resembling an old woman and her dog, a crystal ball, and the remains of two goats tied to stumps. As often happens, the truth is more pathetic than fiction.

Wookey's Arthurian context tends to be overshadowed by Glastonbury. Yet the tale of *Kulhwch and Olwen* is thought to be the earliest Welsh story we have, and it contains ele-

ments from the very dawn of Celtic myth. If it does not allude to Wookey Hole, then where else? cs

The cover to XVII/3 (Summer 1984), by Chris Lovegrove, was based on a Dark Age wheel-cross from near Margam, Glamorgan to illustrate the Celtic Christians theme

"The Birth of Merlin" *Patricia Villiers-Stewart*

• *Patricia drew attention to this then little-known play in XVII/2 (Spring 1984); though partly attributed to Shakespeare most scholars now doubt his co-authorship of "The Birth of Merlin".*

Despite its intriguing title, few people are familiar with this Shakespearean play. It doesn't however claim to be the bard's unaided work; one of the chief clowns of his company, according to the 1662 title page, is cited as co-author. Clowns seem to have been dear to Shakespeare's heart, and a character named Clown, just Clown, has one of the main roles in the story. Can it be that in this tattered, fragmented play, behind the kindly mocking mask of Clown, we are bidden a last farewell?

And yet not such a firm farewell as all that; we cannot easily get rid of our Shakespeare. He will be there waiting for us in the 21st century, waiting for us to catch up with him. What could be more ominous than Merlin's attempt at banishing his father, the Devil, by shutting him up in a mountain, while acknowledging that there he will breed earthquakes? Isn't this just what we fear will happen with our own devils of atomic waste? Then there is that magic wand and book consigned to the deep by Prospero in deference to the "brave new world" of good sense and happiness the young lovers, Ferdinand and Miranda, are hopefully about to create. Both book and wand return with Merlin.

If there was no other proof that Shakespeare was the instigator of this play, it would suffice to examine the record of co-author William Rowley's collaboration with another writer, Thomas Middleton. Their venture called *The World Tost at Tennis* also features the Devil as one of its characters, but otherwise proves to be an unreadable hotchpotch of banality and time-honoured sentiments.

In comparison, *The Birth of Merlin* is shot through with the summer lightning of inspiration, from the subtitle onwards. This, "The Child Hath Found His Father", serves to point up the play's message. Men seek in religion to find a Father Figure to support them: when it can be recognized that a bastard having no father or, being in a worse case, having the Devil as a father, can stand on his own feet and see through this need for a psychological crutch, then he has indeed found his father, can approach an understanding of the complex pattern woven by sex, religion and psychic phenomena.

Survival

To turn to the practical side of how this play survived, it must be remembered that at the time of Charles II's restoration playwrights were non-existent. They had suffered a total eclipse during the Commonwealth There must have been a great searching among the papers of former dramatists to find something to entertain the new King and his court.

We know that Pepys watched another play of Rowley's, so it's quite feasible that someone having access to his scripts (he was already dead by then) found *The Birth of Merlin* among them with evidence of Shakespeare's share in it.

The humorous, critical spirit of this play must have suited the new times well. No wonder it is stated on the front page "As it has been acted several times with great applause". It might well have been considered too dangerous to present when it was first written. It certainly stands the whole basic myth of Christianity upon its head, the better to

inspect it.

Merlin the newborn wonder child has the Devil as his father and Clown for his earthly protector – his Joseph figure – and who do we find in this unholy family playing the role of the Virgin Mary? None other than long suffering Clown's dear sister Joan, shades of Lear in their family name: it is Go-Too't.

Joan Go Too't is the archetypal bumbling innocent country wench who simply cannot resist the supernatural charms of a fine gentleman unexpectedly encountered in the Forest. Not so much sex as loving the highest as she sees it is her undoing, as she later confesses with great insight: "I supposed no mortal creature worthy to enjoy me". A state of mind quite prevalent among young women who like to dream of pop stars or angels or sheiks, anyone rather than the young man round the corner. In the same play it causes two sisters, Modestia and Constantia to get them to a nunnery rather than to marry their devoted betrothed. Modestia had been sparked off by a wonder-working Hermit, due for a Bishopric, and her sister follows her out of jealousy.

Pre-Christian

Whatever Joan's sins were in succumbing to the blandishments of the Devil, rather than to those of the Hermit, her son promises her a splendid tomb: it is to be Stonehenge no less. Since in mythic terms Merlin is accredited with bringing the stones there from Ireland in the first place, it could be considered quite an appropriate way to honour his mother, after her lifetime of enlightened repentance.

Such a choice for interment, so rightly called "a dark enigma to the memory", has overtones bringing to mind the pre-Christian mystery religion, cult of the witches, still partially practised no doubt, at the time of writing, in the depths of the Forest of Arden. We now know that its attempts at integrating human beings with the ecology of the planet and the cycle of the heavens failed, just as Christianity in its present guise is failing. Shakespeare through his comically distorting lens gives us a clear picture of the state of play of both these systems.

Pantomime

In some ways *The Birth of Merlin* seems like a pantomime image of so much that had gone before, so many old favourites turning up to take a last bow. Hamlet, Polonius, Henry VI, Harry Hotspur, Audrey, spirits and sprites galore, even little details like the crab going backwards (not the author at his observant best among crustaceans) or the child born with teeth: all are there. As for the presence of Clown, a Bastard who turns out well, and an assortment of women from innocent, fallen to downright wicked, these are very significant themes in almost any artist's life.

Shakespeare once asked heaven to stand up for bastards. I stand up for the suggestion that this play, in spite of its shortcomings, brings us the last rays of our English master's setting sun.

Prophecy

Messrs W S and W R's gripping account of the Saxon-Celtic war struggle was already many centuries delayed when it first appeared. More centuries were to elapse before it was

commented upon. Not favourably I'm afraid. By the mid-nineteenth century revered authors were supposed to be parfit knights and their ladies parfit ladyes, and this account was far too scandalous to be credited. It was left to moulder in the Bodleian and British libraries in its 1662 edition. However, one of *Pendragon*'s moles industriously brings it to your attention.

The preceding account doesn't stress the detailed description of this war given in the last act of the play which depicts its battles, its frequent deceptions, its lifelike muddle and final victory: this has to be read to be believed, or better still seen on future TV.

Merlin – whose birth we almost witness (does Joan achieve a Guinness record as the first very pregnant unmarried mother to be presented on stage?) – grows to instant wise manhood, though his small stature is stressed. (Is the actor one of the company's boys wearing a beard?) He is already an adept at astronomy-astrology; seeing a blazing comet he declares:

"What revolution, rise and fall of nations | Is figured in that Star that sings
The change of Britain's stage and death of Kings."

And then, prophesying to Arthur's father, he is quite specific about his famous son who he calls a new Worthy:

"It shall be then the best of Knighthood's honour, | At Winchester to fill his castle hall
And at his royal table sit feast | In warlike orders, all their arms round hurled
As if they meant to circumscribe the world..." ☙

Plantard's Secret Parchments *Paul Smith*

• *Researcher Paul Smith subsequently went on to be instrumental in setting up priory-of-sion.com, a site exposing the Rennes-le-Château hoax and the holy bloodline theory popularised by* The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail. *This item (subtitled "On the threshold of madness, part 22") is an account of his unintentional contribution to the Priory's 'secret' dossiers (XVIII/4 February 1986).*

On the 1st October 1985 a brand-new Prieuré Document was deposited in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris. Purporting to be a translation of my article "The Plantard Grail" (*Pendragon* Vol XVII No 3), it was entitled "Le Mystérieux Rennes-le-Château" and was attributed to "Jania Macgillivray". The Deposition slip further revealed that the 14-page document was deposited by "Paul Smith" (a perfect forgery of my signature), who under the pseudonym of Robert Suffert had translated the article from English into French (despite the fact that I don't understand French!).

I had sent a copy of *Pendragon* Vol XVII No 3 to Pierre Plantard, and this was his response...

Needless to say, the document had nothing to do with Jania Macgillivray (one of the researchers for the *Chronicle* documentary, "The Shadow of the Templars"), nothing to do with me, nor my original *Pendragon* article. Far from being a "translation" of my article, "Le Mystérieux Rennes-le-Château" was nothing more than yet another repetition of Plantard's mythomania – how he was using the Rennes-le-Château mystery to further his own mythology. (Page 1 reproduced the cover plate of *Pendragon* Vol XVII No 3, whilst page 14

reproduced pages 24 and 27.)

One thing's for certain, Philippe de Chérisey was not involved in this latest puerile excursion, for he had died at the beginning of July 1985, and the curious feature at his funeral was that his coffin was placed not horizontally, but vertically.

There is a wicked allegation that the so-called "documents" which had been "discovered" by Bérenger Saunière were sold by the priest's niece ("Madame James") in 1965 to Captain Roland Stanmore (Nutting) and Sir Thomas Frazer, and were deposited in a safe-deposit box of Lloyds Bank Europe Limited of London.'

Bearing in mind that Sir Thomas Frazer had died some years ago, I decided to trace his only son. After initial enquiries I received the following response from him (20/8/1983): "After your previous letters, and having the photocopies which you enclosed, I sent these to my solicitor, who was one of my father's executors, to see if he could throw any light on the matter. He says they ring no bells as far as he is concerned, and he has no recollection of hearing of anyone by the name of Roland Stanmore. He has been in touch with Lloyds Bank International (into which I gather Lloyds Bank Europe has now been absorbed), and received the following reply:

In accordance with your request we have made a search in our present and past records and regret to advize that we cannot trace having maintained a dossier in the above name (Sir Thomas Frazer, OBE) or jointly with Captain Roland Stanmore. We are also unable to trace a record of a safe-deposit box or any details in connection with the documents to which you refer."

Enough said. ☙

Reference Jean Delaude *Le Cercle d'Ulysse* (1977) pp 2-3

The Changeless Image *John Matthews*

• *A précis of* The Grail-Seekers' Hand-Book *(Aquarian Press 1986) from XVIII/3 (Easter 1987)*

Contemporary theories of the Grail

There is a famous passage in the *Perlesvaus* which describes how the Grail underwent five mysterious changes which "ought not to be spoken of".[5] This injunction has not prevented many intrepid writers from putting forward new and intriguing theories concerning the form, locale or meaning of the Grail. Whether or not it possesses one shape or function – which seems unlikely – there are certain immutable laws governing such objects which make it virtually impossible to say either where they originate, or, for that matter, why they exist at all. The Grail has exerted a perennial fascination over the minds and hearts of so many people that we should not be surprised if this has resulted in a wide variety of theories. Indeed this began as long ago as the Middle Ages, when the Grail was already seen variously as Cup, Stone, Dish, Ark or Jewel. This vagueness has been seen as something of a challenge by investigators ever since, and in recent times the number of theories relating to the grail have steadily increased.

[5] *The High Book of the Grail* trans N Bryant (Boydell & Brewer 1978)

One of the most recent is that put forward by Noel Currer-Briggs[6] who suggests that the real identity of the Grail resides in the Shroud of Turin – or more specifically the Mandylion, a mysterious wonder-working object which passed through Templar hands during the Crusades and subsequently vanished – reappearing, it has been suggested,[7] at Turin, where it was identified with the Shroud of Christ.

Mr Currer-Briggs makes a convincing case for the movements of the Mandylion from place to place, and if he is right he may well have laid the mystery of the Templar "Head" to rest once and for all. But is the Mandylion the Grail? I think not, although I am willing to allow it to have had a part in the complex stream of influences which helped establish the imagery of the Grail.

More challenging and certainly less easy to evaluate is Michael Beckett's theory[8] which follows a complicated web of clues, finds the Grail to be mathematical formulae, closely bound up with the structure of the Pyramid of Giza and the geomantic layout of various sacred sites in Britain. There is much of an interesting nature in Beckett's theory, but I suspect that it leads us further away from an understanding of the Grail.

The same may be said of what is probably the most notorious of the recent theories – that advanced in the best-selling book *The Holy Blood & the Holy Grail*.[9] The authors' contention that the Grail represents a blood-line rather than an actual object has been the cause of much argument since the book appeared. It has, indeed, probably done more to make the Grail a household word than any other publication since the Middle Ages; but it makes what I can only see as a serious error in taking what has always been regarded as a spiritual object into the political arena. To suggest that the Grail was "invented" purely as a way of writing about the lost dynasty of the French nation seems somehow ludicrous – and the basis of the argument, which turns upon a scribal error which translated the words San Greal (Holy Grail) into Sang Reale (Holy Blood), is rather overworked.

The significance of the Royal Bloodline, or more precisely of the sacred blood of Kingship does, it seems to me, bear more fruit, as another writer has already indicated.[10]

The fact that these – and other theories which point to the Grail's alchemical,[11] Qabalistic or Hermetic[12] origins, or to its pagan ancestry[13] – all fail, to one degree or another, to isolate the mystery, seems only to indicate the real nature of the object, which is in essence changeless rather than changing.

The Grail is indeed capable of being all these things and more, but its actuality lies elsewhere, in the potency of the symbol and the effect it has upon those who go in search of it. After all, why seek the Grail at all – especially if its existence is so tenuous?

[6] Noel Currer-Briggs *The Holy Grail & the Shroud of Christ* (ARA Publications 1984)
[7] Ian Wilson *The Turin Shroud* (Gollancz 1978)
[8] Michael Beckett *The Pyramid and the Grail* (Lailiken Press 1984)
[9] Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (Cape 1983)
[10] Articles by W G Gray in *Sangreal* magazine 1982-3
[11] Emma Jung & Marie-Louise von Franz *The Grail Legend* (Hodder & Stoughton 1978)
[12] Henry & Renee Kahane *The Krater & Grail* University of Illinois 1965)
[13] R S Loomis *The Grail, from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol* (University of Wales Press 1963)

The answer, and it is a personal one, seems to stem from a universal desire to make contact with the infinite, the otherworldly and the divine. The food which the Grail offers to the knights gathered at the Round Table in Camelot is spiritual food, designed to assuage the hunger felt by many people today. In looking for the true meaning of the Grail, it is to this area of our consciousness that we should look – not to the treasure-seekers, the leyhunters, or those who are filled with wild surmise. The theories are endlessly fascinating, and I for one will continue to read them – but I very much doubt if they will prove more than red herrings in the Quest. That is best accomplished by turning inwards rather than outwards, where the true country of the Grail is to be found.[14] ☙

The Islands of the Blest *Steven Banks*

• *An article by Captain Banks (RN Retired) from XIX/2 (Winter 1988-89), one of three issues largely edited by Kate Pollard, Jess Foster's daughter. Steven Banks was a museum curator, author of* The Magpie's Companion: a guide to things found *(J Murray, 1978) and a supporter of the Pendragon dig at Llanelen.*

I first visited the Isles of Scilly almost sixty years ago, as a naval cadet from Dartmouth in the sloop HMS *Forres*. My memories at this distance in time are only of deep clear water over rocks, and the mild whiskered faces of seals alongside a boat.

On my return in 1986 the clear water and the seals are still there, but with leisure sure and inclination I saw much more. All the islands of the group lie on a volcanic dome – the learned word is *lecolith*, egg-shaped – with the blunt end towards the Cornish coast fifteen miles away. Two thousand years ago these islands were a continuous land mass; indeed the lines of field wells may be seen at low tide between some of them.

The Scillies have been inhabited by men for about four thousand years. Neolithic tombs, field systems and hut circles may be encountered anywhere except on the smallest rocky islets. And those of only a few acres in extent continued to he lived in until the last century when the Proprietor concentrated his tenants on half a dozen of the larger islands so as to be near the church and school. One can imagine the sadness caused by his good intentions.

Most of the above outline was gathered from Charles Thomas' book *Exploration of a Drowned Landscape* (Batsford 1985) which I was told about only two days before the end of my visit and at once bought a copy. Professor Thomas discusses one Arthurian theme, the possibility that Arthur lies buried on one of the three islands bearing his name in the Eastward Islands of the group; and he implies to me an Arthurian possibility in the Roman-British settlement on Nomour, another small island about half a mile nor'nor'east (yes!) of the hillocks called Little, Middle and Great Arthur. In my review of the book in *Pendragon* Vol XVIII No 3, I conclude that the groups of tumuli on the Arthur islands are probably Neolithic, because one has been excavated and found to be so.

On a second visit to the Scillies in summer of 1987 I landed on Normour, and we cruised past the other Arthur islands, when I photographed Middle Arthur from the west. But now it was the Roman-British settlement on Nornour that most concerned me. I found it

[14] John Matthews (ed) *At the Table of the Grail* (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1983)

consisted of round dry-stone built huts sited just above a beach on the south side of the island. A total of eleven huts have been excavated (*Nornour: Isles of Scilly Museum Publication* No 7, *nd*) but not all were judged to have been occupied at the same time; indeed all the buildings except the western three were filled with soil and debris before the Roman conquest of Britain. Presumably the inhabitants of the huts cultivated fields, caught fish, and drew water from a well or spring, which may be significant from what follows. I do not envy them their position exposed to the south-west winter gales.

Two of the western huts are of particular interest, because in their upper deposits and immediately outside them, were found scattered three hundred or so brooches (both bow and plate types, many enamelled and of fine quality), twenty miniature pottery cups (2½ inches high), and Roman copper-alloy coins from the reign of Vespasian (AD 69-79) to that of Gratian (AD 367-383) with most intervening Emperors represented. Such a long range in time is unlikely to constitute a deposited hoard of base metal coins; and the same goes for the brooches, which date from the first to the early third century AD. In addition to these brooches, cups and coins there were scraps of Roman glass from many different vessels, fragments of finger rings and other copper-alloy object; with more unusually, specimens of two kinds of moulded clay figurines. The seated female suckling a child has been named the *Dea Nutrix* (nursing goddess) by scholars and, and the standing nude female the Pseudo-Venus. These specifically Celtic figurines were made in Gaul and traded throughout the Celtic lands, where they were 'personal objects of devotion, perhaps owned by women, propitiated in pregnancy and buried with the dead as a protecting divinity'. The pseudo-Venus is 'frequently associated with healing sanctuaries and water' (Miranda Green *The Gods of Roman Britain,* Shire 19, pp 53-4), for example at Bath, the Aquae Sulis of the Romans, a name suspiciously like Scillies.

So, on one of the Isles of Scilly, just north of the Western Approaches to Britain, we seem to have had a Roman shrine of healing, with votive brooches and coins, cups from which to drink or pour the waters, and relevant figurines; all these scattered by the encroaching sea, perhaps with help from early Christian zealots.

Over the island half a mile from Nornour lie the three hillocks of Arthur, the crests of each marked on the Ordnance Survey by a row of *tumuli* which make up a greater concentration of them than anywhere else on the Scillies. The present line of low water springs, below the beach facing Nornour, is marked 'Ladies Ledge'.

Could a folk memory of the shrine on Nornour, with attendant priestesses, and the nearby place of sepulture, have inspired the Avalon of Arthurian tradition? Geoffrey Ashe wrote (*The Quest for Arthur's Britain,* Paladin 1968, p 15) 'Avalon might be Glastonbury but Avalon could also be a Celtic Otherworld or Isle of the Blest away in the sunset...' Nornour/Arth do seem to be a serious contender for Avalon on these general grounds, and to those of us who have watched the sun go down behind the Western Rocks of the Scillies, or trod the flowery turf between their ancient chambered cairns, they have magic enough for the title 'Isles of the Blest'. And the flights of puffins darting over the water are a reminder that Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Vita Merlini* equates Arthur to a puffin. This bird is so well known there that it is pictured on the cover of the Isles of Scilly Ordnance

Survey 1:25,000 Outdoor Leisure Map. Finally it is hardly necessary to remind Pendragons that the first literary reference to Morgan le Fay is also in the *Vita Merlini,* where she dwells with her eight sisters in an island paradise and uses herbs to heal the stricken Arthur.

I would have written this article earlier but that the significance of brooches as votive offerings eludes me. There may be a connection with the Celtic figures of three cloaked and hooded dwarves, the *genii cucullati.* In *The Gods of Roman Britain* (page 57) is written 'At Springhead (Kent) and Bath their presence connects [them] with therapeutic spring ceremonies'. Perhaps their cloaks were fastened with brooches.

My grateful thanks are extended to Humphrey Wakefield, and to the Staff of the Isles of Scilly Museum, for advice end assistance. ☙

The Return of Arthur *Sid Birchby*

• Eddie Tooke took over editorship of the Journal in 1988 (when Pendragon seemed to be about to fold) with this article appearing in the Winter issue, XIX/3.

A curious fact emerged during recent discussions about the future of *Pendragon.* Not a new one, but very relevant. Put simply, interest in Arthuriana has never been constant, yet never died out: not so much a tree as a hardy perennial, with times of growth and times of dormancy. In the late 17th century, Merlin became little more than a character advertising a prophetic almanac: who would have imagined *Lohengrin* or *The Idylls of the King*?

Such rises and falls can be traced back indefinitely, certainly to 1137, when Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* appeared, and with less certainty to the Dark Ages of Nennius and Gildas. The pattern is never in doubt, despite the increasing sparsity of written sources in the earlier times. It merely becomes plainer after, say, Geoffrey's time, when more written sources survive.

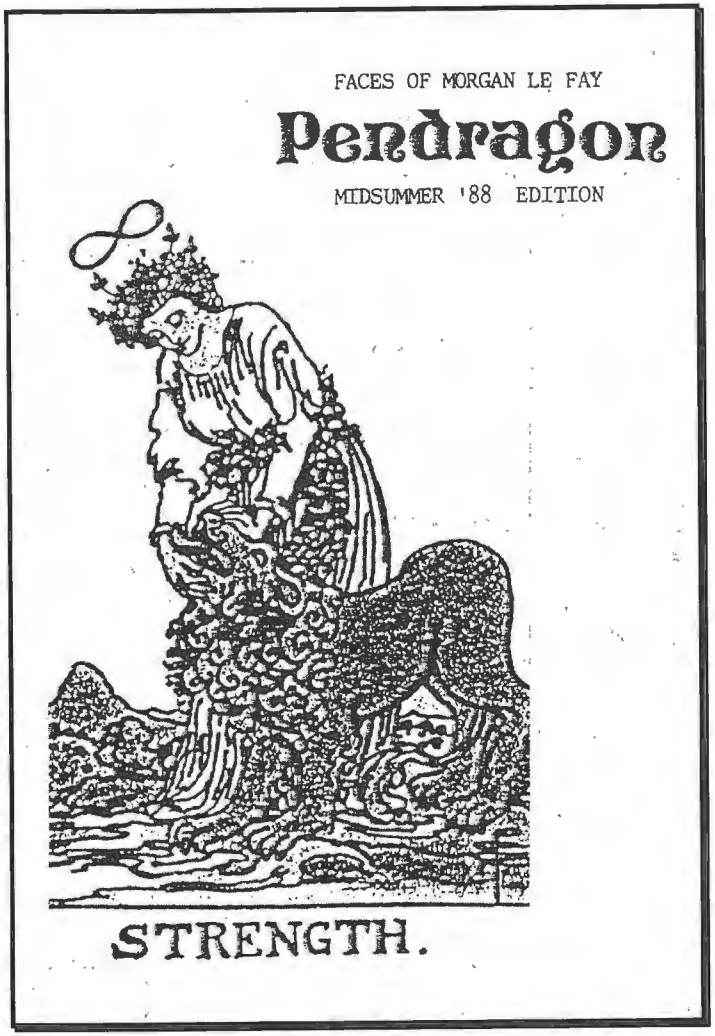
Curious Fact No 2 Arthuriana has always had two aspects: a substratum of folk-belief and periodic literary attention to it. Despite occasional lapses on both sides, neither has ever died. For example, last week at the annual Didsbury Festival I saw the Morris Men doing a dragon dance. By Arthurian rights, the dragon should have been red, yet it was green, and was mistaken for a crocodile! In such ways, legends alter. As Mircea Eliade wrote, myths are living things, and when they cease to grow, they die. So that's all right, but it does not help mythologists.

On the root-stock of popular tradition grow the flowers of artistry, expressing in epic poems, paintings and operas, the glory hidden in legend. What [Cecil] Sharp and Antonin Dvorak did by collecting folk-music others have done with the Arthurian tales. Each element feeds on the other: without external encouragement, popular myths might die, and if they did, what would be left for artists to gather?

So far, the 20th century has been an age of growth for Arthuriana, and *Pendragon* has played a worthy part. Jess Foster started it in order, as it were, to take teenagers off the streets. The result was a group of young amateur archaeologists doing important work at the Cadbury dig. And the Society itself. Today, some 30 years later, the Society faces organisational problems, as its new editor reminds us, but with the good will and effort of

its members, these can be overcome. After all, there must have been similar problems at Camelot ... 'Never mind collecting fewmets – who's going to do the next *Grail on Sunday*!'

My feeling is that a century capable of producing the books of T H White, Rosemary Sutcliff and Geoffrey Ashe has not yet finished with Arthur. Neither has Pendragon, as one would expect after the death of its founder and the honourable retirement of her successors. It refuses to wither away ... and that is the most curious fact of all. ☙



Kate Pollard's cover for XIX/1 (Midsummer 1998) was based on a Tarot card design

Unity in Diversity *Eddie Tooke*

• This is Eddie Tooke's take on Sid's article "The Return of Arthur", also in XIX/3. It is noteworthy for the appearance of Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, a thorn in the flesh for editor and some readers alike.

Sid Birchby, in his current article, makes an interesting point: 'Each element feeds on the other'. Taken in a general sense, this justifies *Pendragon*'s multifarious approach to the Matter of Britain.

The 'curious fact' that Arthur is perennial becomes less curious when viewed in the total light of the cultural spectrum. Separate rays illuminate too little of the colour patterns that would give us a meaningful overall picture. Changing the metaphor, the interplay of different ideas and disciplines, by a process of fertilisation, stimulates healthy growth. Insularity is artificial. Nature, it has been said, is not divided into departments like universities.

Myth, legend, folklore, history, archaeology and mysticism all have their part to play in an in-depth assessment of Arthur and his times – and in his relevance to our own times. Leaving aside any esoteric causes, Arthur survives precisely because he is *diverse*. It is this diversity which excites the imagination – a hidden factor, I suspect, behind the most prosaic attitude.

New ideas are not infrequently sparked off by the influence of apparently dissociated events, which releases a floodtide of discovery. We all know of the link between orchards and orbits because of the apple which popular fable says fell on Newton's head (though I've never understood why it didn't go into orbit around it).

Yes. Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, I know that in an episode of the popular American chat-show appearing on British TV, hostess Oprah Winfrey mentioned her erstwhile weight problem, but The Fat Tum of the Oprah did not inspire Andrew Lloyd-Webber's smash-hit musical. Yes, you're quite right ... it COULD have done. Thanks for your interest anyway.

Let us all keep open minds, then; doing our own thing while acknowledging other people's right – and need – to do theirs. Here endeth the lesson. ☙

On the Road with King Arthur *Tim Porter*

• Tim Porter's account of his creative responses to the Arthurian legends from XX/4 (Autumn 1990). Tim quit theatre in 1986 "to pursue a career as an itinerant lecturer," he writes, and now splits his time equally between Music and Mediaeval History: he works for two museums, for several adult residential colleges and as a tour guide.

I first became aware of Arthur as a young child, when my brother and I were read the stories of the Knights of the Round Table, and adopted the characters into our play. As a teenager, full of grandiose ideas about how I was going to be a composer, I planned a cycle of five operas based on Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, but never got as far as writing anything down!

My first serious brush with the Matter of Britain came when I was a music student. Four

of us were co-opted to write a composite opera for children, based on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. I was to take the third section, the part about the Christmas Games at Castle Bertilak. I can't remember whether I completed my part of the opera or not, but I can remember how we fled in confusion when confronted by the unruly children to whom we had to sell our scheme. In short, the thing never got off the ground.

However, a few years later I was asked by a teacher friend to write an opera for her school, and the *Gawain* idea resurfaced in my mind. Bude Grammar School presented the complete work in the summer of 1971. It was very much a 'folk opera', using several traditional melodies, and with an orchestra and a country dance band facing one another across the stage.

At that time I was very much concerned with founding and running the Celtic Opera Group, and later the same year I presented *Sir Gawain* in Okehampton with this company. From that time forward, productions of *Sir Gawain* became almost an annual event at the New Year, both with the Celtic Opera Group and the Green Branch which succeeded it. In 1976 we first used the new 'slimmed down' version with a chamber ensemble instead of an orchestra, enabling us to tour with the show.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a theatrical gift. For a start, one has to have an impressive Green Knight, a giant figure with detachable head. Secondly it is a good story, keeping the audience guessing right up to the end. In the opera, Arthur is the archetypal noble king, though capable of playfulness when the court carouses, even letting his hair down enough to indulge in a game of leapfrog!

In 1973 I portrayed Arthur again on stage, this time in the opera *The Entertaining of the Noble Head*. This time, however, it was the historical Arthur I was concerned with. The story of the opera works on three parallel levels – (1) a mythic tale from the *Mabinogion*; (2) the real Arthur; (3) a modern story. I had my modern heroine. An artist called Katy, finding her way into the past by walking into her own paintings. The past with which she becomes involved is that of the 5th/6th century, in which Arthur is defending Britain against the Saxon invaders. So we took care to costume Arthur as 'authentically' as possible and portrayed him as a bluff cavalry-officer type.

The Noble Head has been staged twice, both times as a West Country tour; it is one of my more 'serious' for want of a better word pieces, with a musical idiom more difficult than *Gawain*. In 1973 I saw it as a personal statement of some importance, though I think if it were done now, it would seem to have dated rather seriously.

In 1974 the Celtic Opera Group disbanded, to be succeeded in 1976 by the Green Branch Theatre Company. I soon broadened my scope to writing plays in rhyming verse, and it wasn't long before I subjected Arthurian legend to this treatment. Thus in 1981 we presented a pantomime *The Marvels of Merlin*.

Merlin is based partly on Geoffrey of Monmouth, partly on the Welsh tale *Culhwch and Olwen*. It features a principal boy, a dame, and an all-singing-dancing cast. Arthur is presented as a guileless naïve youth whom Merlin works like a glove-puppet. The knights are morons who only want adventure, which Merlin doles out to them like a sort of ration. In fact Merlin runs everything, leaving us to wonder what will happen when he is gone ...

Be quiet you boys. I hate this noise; | My mind's on higher things.
It's plain to see you don't need me – | I'm through with courts and kings.
Cheer up young knight, you'll be all right. | I've left you in good hands;
King Arthur copes, he knows the ropes, | He sort of understands
The way to rule, though any fool | Could do it with some practice
And by the way, I ought to say | He must be married; fact is
All kings need wives to share their lives. | And Arthur p'raps might make
A handsome pair with Guinevere; | So will you undertake
To see it done this week old son? | She ought to be okay,
And if she's not, I think we've got | A limitless array
Of willing girls with flaxen curls | To bring him forth an heir.
And if they can't, then still we shan't | Have any cause to fear,
Because there dwells beyond the fells | A nephew to the king;
What is his name? – it's all the same – | Mordred, or some such thing;
He ought to do for such as you, | I've heard he's not too bad:
I think that's all, so have a ball ! | Chin up! Don't look so sad.

I tried to show what happened next in the 1984 sequel *Lancelot: the Tale of the Grail*. In this play, King Arthur is left alone; with Merlin gone, everything seems to go wrong – for instance his disappointing marriage to Guinevere and the disappearance of the knights on their wild-goose chase after the Grail...

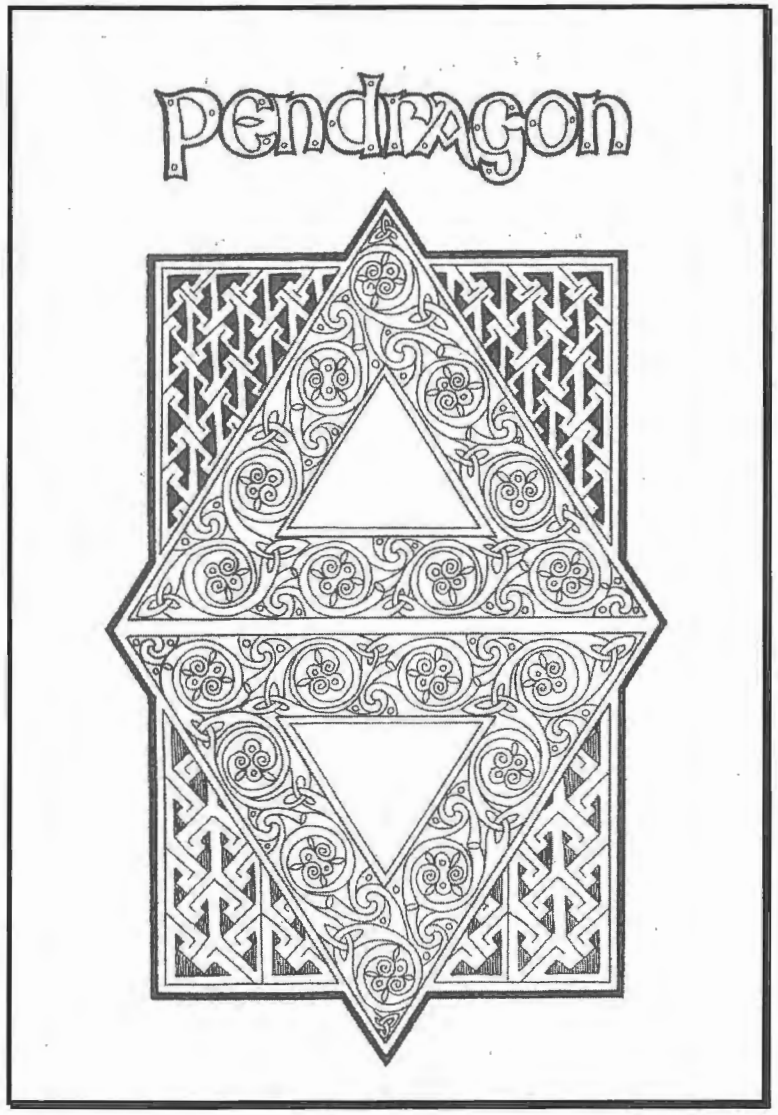
How silent stands the Hall! | I feel the shadows fall.
Now they are gone, I'd have them stay – | I often wished they'd go away;
Their stupid chatter bored me stiff – | But in their absence, it's as if
The dark that lay in wait | Had slipped within the gate.
I now have all the time I need | To study history, to read,
And all those other pleasant things | Which seldom come the way of kings.
I should be full of high delight, | Yet only feel the fall of night
And know that I'm alone | Upon a shaky throne.
Shall I go seek out Guinevere? | Perhaps not. I don't think she'll care
To see me now; she's with her dames – | I do not even know their names
These days; they have their lives to lead | And frankly. I don't think they need
Their husbands and their sons at all | And think that knighthood's rather small,
And what's more I agree! | But still they won't want me.
I'll sit awhile and watch the fire ... | *MORDRED*: A traveller craves an audience, sire.

Thus Mordred makes his first appearance at Arthur's Court. I remember how Steven Deproost played the part in the first production of *Lancelot* – oily smooth one moment, spitting venom the next.

I'm sorry to have to tell you that in this play Arthur emerges as a bumbling idiot, well-meaning but clueless. His reputation is an illusion created by Merlin, and now bolstered by the deeds of Lancelot. So in various plays I've presented Arthur across the spectrum,

from hero to fool.

Merlin and *Lancelot* have had three productions each. Those were exciting days: to see one's ideas come to life on stage is a thrilling experience. At present, Green Branch is disbanded, but I hope to start another company in the future. ☙



Simon Rouse's cover for XXI/2 (Spring 1991), a miscellany issue

Artus ba Breizh *Simon Rouse*

• Simon sent this in as a personal letter following the holiday he and his wife Anne spent in Brittany, adapted with his permission as an article in XXII/2 (Spring 1992) by Fred Stedman-Jones who had taken over editorship from Eddie.

We had a marvellous time in Brittany, where the Arthurian tradition is very much alive and well, even more so than in Wales or the West Country. We visited about six or seven sites with an Arthur connection along with quite a few dolmens and menhirs. The weather was pretty changeable but the two sites we had hired were on fairly high ground anyway so we tended to attract any low cloud that was around. We did have two really hot days, though the days of arriving and leaving! Never mind, we still saw a lot of the country.

As we arrived at St Malo we took the opportunity of going to Mont St Michel which is every bit as spectacular as its Cornish namesake. Provided you had enough food you could defend this site forever. The surrounding landscape is very flat so the mount itself becomes even more prominent. The next two sites we visited were both in the Forêt d'Huelgoat in west central Brittany. The forests here are what they must have been like in Britain before modern farming methods cleared the land. There is so much oak and elm, not to mention lots of other species; it was wonderful to walk through them. Everywhere is so silent too, the country being underpopulated if anything. The only sounds as you walk through the forests are birdsong, the wind rustling the branches and the sound of a bubbling stream, and it makes the place a real paradise. It was hard to drag ourselves away sometimes. The two sites were the Camp D'Artus and the Grotte D'Artus. The Camp is an Iron Age hillfort much like Iron Age hillforts everywhere, but the Grotte is a 'natural dolmen'. Massive stones have fallen down the hillside to rest with one landing on top of the others to form a capstone. It forms a cave and provides a good place to shelter, and is very picturesque. There is an excellent crêperie in the forest too which makes it an even more attractive place to visit.

For our first week we were based more to the west of the country so we had to wait until the second week to see any more Arthurian sites. As I mentioned, though, we did visit a few stones. One in particular near Brinnilis was a burial chamber with an upright stone inside it, something we hadn't seen or heard of before. It had recently been excavated; in fact we met one of the guys who did it while we were there, and the power emanating from the site was phenomenal. I'm not particularly sensitive but I was really tingling when inside the chamber. One thing about the standing stones in Brittany—they are enormous! Two we came across were absolute giants, as big if not bigger than the trilithons at Stonehenge. Both these had strong energy fields so maybe size does have something to do with the amount of power needed at a site as well as the type of stone. I'm thinking of the difference between the energy at Avebury and the Rollrights where the size of the stones is very different.

The highpoint on our Arthurian trail was in the Forêt de Paimpont. This once vast forest stretched halfway across Brittany but is now a shadow of its former self. It is the forest of Brocéliande where Merlin was trapped by Viviane and is rich in legend. We

stopped first at the church of St Onenne at Trehorenteuc where the walls of the church are covered with Arthurian paintings, a large mosaic on the west wall and some marvellous stained glass. You might be familiar with the mosaic but I had only seen a black and white photo before so I was really amazed by the vibrant colours. The paintings had been done in the 1940's, I think, and portrayed various aspects of the Grail Quest. It is a lovely little church and a place I had wanted to see for a long time. Further on into the forest and we tried to find the Fontaine de Barenton, a spring said to have been the spot where Viviane actually did the dirty deed. There are a number of paths through the forest and the spring proved difficult to find. We did find it, with help, although I think we should have heeded the omen as we entered the forest outside Trehorenteuc. As I said, the forest has been extensively felled and a lot of the outlying area has recently been burnt and cut down. If ever a place resembled the Waste Land, this was it! It was almost as if the arch magician was trying to tell us something. Still, the spring itself is a very peaceful spot and the nicest place of the Forêt de Paimpont that we saw.

We journeyed a little further up the road to the Château de Comper, where Lancelot was brought up by the Lady of the Lake. This too is in a lovely setting with the lake stretching out for a long way, the line of vision ending in trees once again. The water was perfectly still and it was not hard to imagine a hand holding a sword emerging from the water. We also had an unexpected bonus at the Château, too. It is the Centre de L'Imaginaire Arthurien, and has exhibitions during the summer months. This year's was 'Excalibur' and was really excellent. There were various stands showing different aspects of the Arthurian legends, Celtic myths and history, a lot of Gustave Doré's illustrations for Tennyson's *Idylls* and, best of all, props and stills from John Boorman's film. Arthur's, Mordred's, Merlin's and Morgana's costumes were there as well as Excalibur and, conveniently placed out of reach, the Grail. Two films were also part of the exhibition: one to do with the forest itself and one of John Boorman, filmed last winter at his home in Co Wicklow, talking about the film and his interests in myth, legend and spirituality amongst other things. It was most illuminating and a great exhibition, and all for only 20 francs (2 quid). It would seem that these exhibits are yearly – 1990's was called 'Arturus Rex'.

Something else that happens each year, in many places throughout Brittany, are what's known as *son-et-lumière* spectaculars. These things are 'sound and light' shows, the lights being fireworks and a lot of them have Arthurian themes. We visited the Forteresse de Largoet near Elven and the shows were scheduled to take place later in the week (unfortunately when we were coming home). The Forteresse is all that is left of a keep and tower, set on a small lake but with all the banners and stalls set up looked very medieval. This year's theme was 'Tristan and Yseult' and last year's was 'Launcelot of the Lake'. It might possibly be Arthurian in nature every year at Elven, I don't know. I have a photo of one of these and it does look really spectacular.

We came across an interesting tipple too, something called Cervoise Lancelot, which is *bière ancienne bretonne* and is mighty fiercesome stuff. It's like a cross between mead and Carslberg Special Brew and so cloudy that you can't see your fingers through the other side of the glass. Not something you can drink a lot of but interesting to try all the same. It

has a beautiful label on the bottle, which we kept.

While in Quimper we found a very interesting shop called Ar Bed Keltiek. It sells Celtic books. Music, T shirts, posters, pottery, in fact anything Celtic you can think of. Needless to say, a man could go crazy in there! They could be a good outlet for *Pendragon* so I'm going to send them the last few issues and some info to see if they would be interested in selling them. The interest is certainly there judging by all the events happening. [...] ☙

Rosemary Sutcliff *F C Stedman-Jones*

• *Fred's appreciation, in XXII/4 (Autumn 1992), reflected Rosemary Sutcliff's association with the Pendragon Society following the publication of her Arthurian novel* Sword at Sunset *in 1963.*

Rosemary Sutcliff died on the 23rd July, 1992, aged 71. She was born in Surrey in 1920, the daughter of a naval officer and her childhood was spent moving between dockyards. Her mother had wished for a boy so Rosemary was raised under a rigid naval discipline. In later life she considered "I do not think it did me any harm, maybe some of it helped me in later years." Self-discipline she certainly had. To meet Rosemary Sutcliff was initially a shock for she was a little lady in a wheelchair, crippled by Still's Disease, a form of juvenile arthritis contracted when she was two.

Penelope Lively has written: "In her memoir of childhood, *Blue Remembered Hills*, she describes her wheelchair falling over when she was quite small, depositing her in the long grass where, instead of yelling for help, she simply lay observing and recording the close up miniature world of plants and insects. The incident sums her up in a curious way." And, "her whole being was subsumed into those enormous alert eyes (from which sprang those vivid intensely physical books)."

These observations may touch the root of Rosemary Sutcliffe's creative drive for, trapped in a frail body, her imagination embodied itself in the heroes and heroines of her books, often children alone or outcast who grow into adulthood courageously striving to overcome almost insurmountable odds. Her stories pulled no punches, her heroes often fail or make the wrong choices and have to face the consequences. She loved the past but, again, her vision of it was unsentimental. She was deeply interested in how people lived, worked and interacted and how peoples with different beliefs co-existed and eventually merged together. She evoked time and place with an incredibly sure touch and David Gilmour the writer remembers how Rosemary Sutcliff led him among the vanished races in the Caledonian forest, among harpers and war hosts, to the bonfire festival of Lammas and Beltane and the mead horns of Saxon feastings. Her descriptions of war and combat were amazingly vivid.

Rosemary wrote for children as intelligent readers and made the past available and fresh to them. Her books became a yardstick by which to measure historical fiction for children because of their integrity, their accuracy and their insight. She produced over fifty books which were translated into fifteen languages and she was writing the morning she died in her elfin longhand, holding the pen almost upside down in her twisted fingers. She tells us how she received a letter once which read, "Dear Miss Sutcliff, I enjoy your books

very much and I hope when you are dead you will go on writing books and I can go on reading them." In a strange way this hope will be realized for there are other works yet to be published which she left in manuscript form.

If you still have the Oxford University Press editions of her works with their powerful illustrations by Charles Keeping treasure them, their counterparts today are meagre, un-illustrated paperbacks. If you don't then please buy even these for your children; better still, comb the second-hand bookshops for them for they are a precious legacy. ☙

The Twentieth Year of Llanelen *Kate Pollard*

• *Kate's summary of progress after two decades of the Society's Gower dig, also in XXII/4*

I thought that I would update *Pendragon* readers on the continuing work of writing the Llanelen Dig Final Reports. The Llanelen project is the Pendragon Society's longest running one so far. Although many members of the Society have been involved in the actual dig, much of the later work which has followed the ending of the excavation itself has had to be carried on 'in the wings'. For this reason some of us who have taken a major role in the Dig split away to concentrate on it. We called ourselves the Llanelen Research Committee for reasons of identification in the world of archaeology. Because of the time scale that has been involved newer members of the Society may not have heard about Llanelen so I will sketch in some background.

Our investigation of Llanelen, North Gower, began in 1973. All that was then visible to the eye was the scattered remains of a small building which was known to have been a chapel at some time in the past. The owner of the land where it lay, Don Howells, interested the Society in the antiquity of these enigmatic remains, and invited us to carry out an archaeological investigation. Both Llanelen's scanty written history and local tradition pointed to its being a much older site, possibly even Dark Age. The Society had recently conducted several field trips to South Wales and had developed an interest in the peregrinations of Celtic saints, and in particular St Illtud, traditionally cousin to Arthur. The parish church in this chapel's locale had Illtud connections. Pendragon was also committed to the investigation of Dark Age history where it coincided with the Society's aims and interests. That was why several people in the Society with experience in archaeology gathered volunteers and set off in the summer of '73 to open an archaeological investigation of the site. This investigation continued until 1985, and during this period we spent about three weeks a year – our holidays – camping beside the site on an exposed hillside by night and digging by day in order to do it. The project involved the regular recruitment of volunteers, camp and archaeological equipment and support for which we are most grateful. Hilarity, many adventures and firm friendships also resulted. The core members of the team have remained with it right to this day.

The report of all the work and findings began to be compiled in 1985 when excavation on the site finished. Five of us are involved in its production: Chris Lovegrove, Nik Wright, Alex Schlesinger and myself, all early Pendragon members, and Jon Kissock who was a local schoolboy recruit in the 70s. Now he has three archaeology degrees and is currently

working in field archaeology. All that has already appeared in print about Llanelen and aspects of the Gower is his work.

Publishing the various reports for this Dig will be an ongoing process because of course research does not stand still. We intend to begin to appear in print next year in the *Gower Magazine*, then various reports will appear in academic journals the order has not yet been finalised, but we will note these in *Pendragon* in due course.

The core of the report is now complete. It describes the three phases of past occupation and activity on the Llanelen site and the fourth phase which covers the period since its final abandonment up to the present day. In Phase 1, there was the earliest pre-mediaeval wooden building which was domestic and early ecclesiastical. It had graves, and a hearth with a flue which has been tentatively interpreted as a bread oven, and two large pits. Phase 2, the subsequent ecclesiastical phase – beginning pre 1214 with the construction of an earth platform as a basis on which to build a stone building, with nave, probably gabled, surrounded by a path and a graveyard. 3: in this phase, about 1240-1350, the building became secular; the stone building was shored up, supported and repaired, another domestic building was constructed nearby and the site probably became a farmstead. Most of the pottery remains are from this period. During the fourth and last phase it became derelict and some of the stone was robbed to build a bridge nearby. By the early C20th and possibly even before that the ruin was used as a base for a hayrick.

Much work has been done on the geology and geography of the site and surrounding area, its agriculture, economy, social and documentary history, the derivation of the name Llanelen, and of course on actual 'finds' from the Dig.

These include – and now a long and by no means comprehensive list follows – human and animal bones; grain which was probably carbonised during a cooking accident; two pieces of worked flint which pre date our period; some glass: pieces from a flask are already known to be late Roman, and some of better quality are thought to be C5th or C6th; pottery sherds from at least four jugs including Saintonge, Redcliffe, Avon, and Monnow Valley Ware, Gwent; and a minimum of ten cooking or storage vessels all 1200-1350, and a few later ones; quernstones and hones (whetstones) of local material, the latter probably 13th-14th century. We await further information on the following our little bronze horse's head bridle cheekpiece, said to be of Scandinavian origin; also of our metal slag, to know exactly what was being processed; some metal; some early glass and a fine glass bead with a white trailed pattern which we already know is Saxon and rather special. All the feature numbers which refer to every aspect of the site are being indexed and cross-referenced and a matrix compiled which will draw together all the features and relate them to the various phases of activity at the site. The indexing and the matrix should be complete later this Autumn. After that we plan to re-inter the human bones and organise the remainder of the necessary backfilling to be carried out.

The National Museum of Wales in Cardiff has agreed to take charge of all the dig records, but some of this Archive itself needs conservation work carried out on it because it is now very old and well worn through use and must be made accessible for other archaeologists and researchers. The site has proved to be an important one,

archaeologically speaking, and became a listed Ancient Monument when our work drew attention to this fact. Its antiquity makes it important in the greater context of the Celtic Church in South Wales. Several of the finds – the glass, the bead, and the cheekpiece – have aroused interest amongst archaeologists. The next year should see exciting progress and the disclosure of interesting information on these finds as it gradually becomes available to us. Aspects of these discoveries are very exciting but I'm afraid all these precious pieces of jigsaw will never fit neatly into an overall picture – rather into fascinating glimpses which will only make sense in conjunction with other similar jigsaws. I will report back to *Pendragon* as and when the publishing process begins with information on where the reports are appearing. Meanwhile here are the details on Gower and Llanelen related papers already published by Jon and one by Graham Jones who dug with us for two seasons. [...] ☙

References

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Jonathan Kissock 'Farms, Fields and Hedges: Aspects of the Rural Economy of North East Gower c 1300- c 1650' *Archaeologica Cambrensis* Vol CXL 1991, pp 130-147

— 'The Open Fields of Gower: A Case Study and a Reconsideration' *Journal of the Gower Society*, 37, pp 41-9

— 'The Evidence for Wine Consumption at Llanelen, Gower, c 1300' *Journal of Wine Research*, 1991, Vol 2, No 3, pp 203-208

Gawain and the Green Knight *Richard Steadman-Jones*

• *Much of Richard's current research is concerned with "western views of non-western languages, and, in particular, the ways in which colonial agents from countries like Britain and France viewed the languages of their Asian, African, and American colonies", all of which allows him a unique take on a modern recreation of a medieval masterpiece, published in XXII/4 (Autumn 1992).*

Beeston Castle – Friday 14th August 1992

Beeston Castle, now in ruins, is set on a rock of red sandstone which rises 500 feet out of the Cheshire plain, wound around with a network of footpaths climbing up to the castle through woodland gorse and bracken. For an evening in August the Midsommer Actors Company changed the hill into the landscape of Gawain's mythic journey. As they led their crowd, 200 strong, through the paths and up the hill they enacted Gawain's story in a sequence of happenings, one set on a lawn beneath a tree, one an a bracken covered slope, one in a grassy opening in the woods all the way up to Bertilack's castle in the form of the ruin itself.

This beautiful idea of telling the story while moving through the landscape presents challenges to performers and production team alike as they move out of the focused space of the theatre. The Midsommer Actors have developed a bold and exciting style of performance in response to these challenges. On a technical level their vocal production was excellent so the alliterative language rang out, full blooded, through the difficult open spaces – plenty of north-western accents, I was pleased to hear, for the Gawain poet was a northerner himself. The event was filled with singing both solo and in harmony –

authentic mediaeval lyrics creating and changing the atmosphere while the instrumental music was low key but evocative – bells and cymbals, mediaeval woodwind and a violin – Bertilack cut a striking figure silhouetted against the evening sky as he blew his hunting horn high on the castle walls and the penultimate happening of the play was accompanied by the strange sound of the hurdy-gurdy.

Not only was the play evocative, it was also funny and I was delightful that Simon Corble's script avoided being po-faced and worthy about the story. Arthur celebrated Christmas with a red nose and a party streamer: Gawain, snatching forty winks from questing, was unceremoniously ejected from his hammock by Morgan Le Fey in a bear costume and the inhabitants of 'the Wilderness of the Wirral' were real scouse wide-boys. All this went down well with children and adults alike and was very sensitively mixed with the serious elements of the story. In the same way the language was an exciting mixture of styles: alliterative like the poem with some of the very beautiful nature descriptions recast in language evocative of the original text but with modern idioms and language blended in. The same applies to the design of the production: at other locations they used motorbikes for horses and very effective it looks from the press cuttings, however English Heritage were having none of this at Beeston.

All these factors combined to create an experience which was magical and at the same time fun the Midsommer Actors are producing work of real imagination and quality and I was very intrigued by the ideas which their treatment of the Gawain poem raised. The play began at the foot of the hill, the gate-house representing Camelot, with the appearance of Morgan le Fey. Now in the poem itself Bertilack reveals that she is responsible for his transformation and, so, for the testing of Gawain. The source of her enmity to the court of Arthur is not explained and she appears scarcely integrated into the story at all. Here she becomes a much more developed character stating her grievances right from the start and these grievances are very contemporary indeed. First, the court has converted to Christianity and so turned away from the nature gods which Morgan identified by indicating the beautiful trees in the landscape around us and addressing them by the names of Celtic gods. This tension between Christianity and paganism is, of course, present in the poem but here it becomes an image of our modern concern with our deteriorating relationship with the natural world. This is compounded by the fact that Morgan, a priestess of the old religion, is not allowed to join the Christian priesthood because she is a woman while Merlin, by contrast, is able to mix with the monks just because he is a man. There is the suggestion here that Morgan's grudge is Arthur's loss of respect for the completeness of life.

Lines 491 to 535 of the poem consist of a description of nature – the passing cycle of the year which brings us to the time when Gawain must set out on his journey to find the Green Knight: not the stuff of drama you might think, no action, no conflict: In this play, however, the description became a speech by Merlin so he too was linked to this idea of respect for the natural world yet he, unlike Morgan, is still tolerated within the court and, in fact, goes on to bestow arms upon Gawain, establishing him as his benefactor and protector (Morgan as radical: Merlin as liberal?!).

This gives a special significance to the symbol which is blazoned upon Gawain's shield – the Pentangle – presented in the poem as a Christian symbol originating with Solomon who conceived of it "in betoknyng of trawthe" with each of the five points coming to represent symbolic sets of five: the five wits, the five fingers, the five wounds of Christ, the five joys that the Virgin Mary had in the infant Christ and five virtues in which Gawain excelled. This, clearly, is a reinterpretation of an existing pagan symbol and when presented by Merlin it becomes a much more ambivalent image, the presentation itself taking a magical form in the play: the shield burst into flame, the pentangle being depicted on it on fire at a touch from Merlin's staff.

Again, the idea emerges of the old religion operating within the new context. There was more nature magic when Merlin used seeds to induce visions in Gawain of the route his quest would take and Merlin finally promised to follow him in his journey, "as close as I dare."

"Sumwhyle wyth wormez he werrez, and with wolues als,
Sumwhyle wyth wodwos, that woned in the knarrez,
Bothe wyth bullez and berez, and borez otherauvle,
And etaynez, that hym anelede of the heghe felle."

These adventures, now, were condensed into three scenes. In the first Gawain has an encounter with a bear which is really Morgan in disguise, emphasizing for us her importance in his testing. In the second he meets her again disguised as an old woman gathering herbs. Once he has passed on his way she reveals herself to Merlin before using the magic he himself has taught her to blast him into the far distant future out of harm's way. Finally, Gawain encounters the bandits of 'Wyrale' but Morgan, disguised again as a bear, chases them away – again stage-managing his progress to the castle of Bertilack where he will be tested.

The stay at Bertilack's castle was beautifully choreographed: the repetitive nature of the story reflected in the music and the hunt excitingly created in movement and speech. The Green Chapel was sinisterly lit with candles set in the rocks and skulls strewn across the ground and the character of Morgan had been so well built up through the events of the play that it came as no surprise when it was finally revealed explicitly that she had engineered the whole experience. The themes had been raised and it was left to us to decide what the test had shown; at any rate that the values represented by Arthur's court must be examined and considered. The situation was complicated by the arrival of Merlin from the future dressed as an acid house raver to great humorous effect but also to suggest what about our own relationship to the events of the play?

The reshaping of the material made it dramatically viable and also raised some contemporary questions from the Gawain story without being heavy handed or pompous about it. The atmosphere of the event was beautifully magical and as we all wandered down the hill at the end of the evening, the path lit by lanterns and the full moon in the sky, there was a strong sense of having been on a journey greater than that represented by the paths of the hill. If you have the opportunity to see the Midsommer Actors Company in action at any time do go and see them.

The Midsommer Theatre Company

This venture is the brainchild of Simon Corble, an actor trained at Manchester Polytechnic. On a day-out spent an Hilbro Island in 1990 he was cut off by the tide and had the inspired idea of performing *The Tempest* there. Audiences had to walk two miles across the sands at low tide to 'Prospero's Is1and' and return by the setting sun when the tide receded. In 1991 Hilbro became the setting for *Treasure Island* when cutlasses flew, children ran on the beach with Billy Bones and all joined in the hunt for the treasure. Since then they have performed Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree* at Hardcastle Crags and *Gawain* at suitable venues in the North West. Their aim is described as allowing audiences 'to enjoy the freedom of live drama in the special atmosphere created by the genius loci.' cs

H G Wells and the Sleeper King *W M S Russell*

• *This article from XXIV/3 was an edited version of Part 1 of his essay "Folktales and H. G. Wells", published in* The Wellsian *No.5 (Summer 1982) by Professor W M S Russell, MA, DPhil, CBiol, FIBiol, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Reading. Eric Fitch gained the future Society President's permission to print his essay, and skilfully edited and introduced it.*

"H G Wells (1866-1946) may not be an author who immediately springs to mind in connection with Arthurian tradition, but the following article by Professor W M S Russell reveals some surprising associations in Wells's works. Best known for his seminal science fiction and the later almost Dickensian novels, Wells spanned the Victorian and the atomic ages. As novelist, prophet, popular educator and world reformer, he became the most influential author of the first half of the twentieth century with over 100 books to his name such as *The Time Machine* (1895), *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910) and *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933). However, it is to two of Wells's lesser known, though praiseworthy, works that Professor Russell introduces us."

H G Wells wrote *When the Sleeper Wakes* in 1897-8. In his own words, he "scamped the finish", in the hope of a quick sale, because he was suffering from kidney disease and feared he might be unable to earn for some time. The whole book gave him great trouble, and even after rewriting it in 1910 as *The Sleeper Awakes* he was never satisfied. In the preface to the revised version, he described it as "one of the most ambitious and least satisfactory of my works". Whatever its faults, it shows Wells at the height of his powers as a prophet: "television, broadcasting, aeroplanes, phonetic spelling, urban walkways – all these are described in convincing detail". (1) Personally, I find it the most exciting of all Wells's novels.

The two versions are identical in respect of the points 1 shall mention, so I need not distinguish them. The story begins with the Sleeper racked by insomnia, the result of drugs taken to keep awake and write a progressive pamphlet under pressure. He falls into a trance, and wakes two hundred and three years later to a changed world. So far it is the venerable motif of Magic Sleep extending over Many Years. This goes back at least to the story of Epimenides of Cnossus in Crete, who was sent to fetch a sheep, turned aside for a nap in a cave, and woke up after an interval ranging in different accounts from forty to

sixty years. Epimenides was probably a real person flourishing about 600 BC; the story of his sleep was first recorded by Theopompus in the 4th century BC.

Wells's Sleeper has been used as titular owner by the manipulators of a giant multinational trust, which has grown until, by the time he wakes, he is "Master almost of the earth". The trust is administered by an unscrupulous oligarchy, who keeps the people enslaved in a vast Labour Company. When the Sleeper wakes the oligarchs try to dispose of him, but the people revolt. The revolution succeeds, with the backing of a discontented oligarch called Ostrog, who is out to become dictator. While Ostrog is consolidating his power, he tries to keep the Sleeper amused; luckily the amusement that attracts him is learning to pilot an aeroplane. Eventually, the sleeper realises what Ostrog is up to, confronts him, and drives him into flight from the capital, London. The dictator comes back, with barbarian troops from Africa, to attack the democracy the Sleeper is setting up. This is, I believe, the kind of specific forecast Wells often got as a fruit of his sustained imaginative efforts to envisage the future. For, thirty-eight years later, the rebel general Franco attacked the Spanish democracy with Moorish troops from Africa, whose barbarian proclivities included castrating the bodies of the loyalist dead. In the Wells novel, with folktale simplicity, the Sleeper takes his aeroplane up to engage Ostrog's air transports single handed. He wins the battle, but crashes to his death.

Now imagine Wells, ill, anxious, finishing his work, like the Sleeper himself, under pressure. In these conditions, as he came to conclude his story, I believe this, in many ways, most English of writers returned, quite unconsciously, to the root legend of English literature. The groundwork of association was already laid at the beginning of the novel, when the Sleeper forced himself to keep awake for a battle against social injustice. Just so did Beowulf keep vigil to meet and overcome the monster Grendel. Near the end of the Old English epic, the old king goes out alone to fight the Firedrake that is destroying his people. "You soldiers", he tells his men, "may watch from this hill. It is not your business nor any man's but mine to measure strength with the monster".(2) As the Sleeper, too, goes out to slay a monster and die, he "would let no other man attempt it, saying: "he who takes the greatest danger, he who bears the heaviest burden, that man is King".

Beowulf is not the only hero associated with Wells's Sleeper King. The Sleeper is first introduced, and falls into his trance, in the neighbourhood of Boscastle in Cornwall. We are here in Arthurian country, within a few miles of Tintagel, where Arthur was conceived (according to Geoffrey of Monmouth), and Camelford, where he died in battle (according to Leland and others).

True, there was no castle at Tintagel in the Dark Ages, and Geoffrey probably picked on the place because a castle had just been built there (in the 1140s) by his patron's half-brother, Reginald, Earl of Cornwall. True, the location of Arthur's last battle at Camelford was the result of misreading an inscription. (3) True, when Robert Hunt visited Tintagel and Camelford in 1863, he "sought with anxiety for some stories of the British king, but not one could be obtained". (4) But, for all that, the legend of Arthur has long been important in Cornwall, and especially the legend that Arthur is not dead. In 1113, a Frenchman visiting Cornwall got into trouble for referring to his death. About 1300, the Cornish were

still reported to be expecting Arthur's return. They apparently supposed he was living meanwhile in the form of a bird, and a Victorian gentleman who shot at a raven near Penzance was warned by a local he might have shot King Arthur. The twentieth-century Federation of Old Cornwall Societies chose as its motto: "he is not dead, King Arthur". (Is it too far- fetched to connect the Cornish conception of Arthur as a bird with the Sleeper's triumph and death as an aviator?)

In any case, when Wells cycled with his wife Jane to Cornwall in the summer of 1895, he might well have had Arthurian associations: and whatever the local folklore, or lack of it, Boscastle was in a thoroughly Arthurian neighbourhood for a literate Victorian. In most parts of England and Wales (and also on the continent), the legend of Arthur's survival takes the more familiar form of his sleeping in a cave, until the day when he awakes to save his people. When some Victorian antiquarians visited Cadbury Castle, an old man asked them: "Have you come to take the king out?" This is the folktale motif called Kyffhauser, after the sleeping place of the Hohenstaufen Emperor Friedrich I Barbarossa in a similar legend. It fits Wells's Sleeper King like a glove, and thus connects him with a Celtic as well as a Germanic hero. There is no evidence that either Beowulf or Arthur was a conscious association to the Sleeper in Wells's mind. However, three decades later, Wells returned, this time consciously and explicitly, to Cornish legend, in *The Autocracy of Mr Parham* (1930). This is a comedy about a foolish and ineffectual don who dreams he is a Facist dictator. Parham's dictatorship is eventually challenged by an industrial chemist and a millionaire, who raise to the surface the lost land of Lyonesse, between Land's End and the Scillies, and build there a giant chemical factory. The legendary land of Lyonesse, reputed to contain one hundred and forty churches, was supposed to have been submerged in the exceptionally high tide recorded for the year 1099. There are in fact signs of subsidence in the neighbourhood. Such legends are found in other parts of Cornwall, and in several places in Wales. F J North, who studied the Welsh legends, showed they were probably echoes of losses of small settlements in real inundations in the Bronze Age or Neolithic, post dated and magnified in medieval folklore. (5) Lyonesse was connected with Tristan in medieval Arthurian literature; it seems to have been Tennyson who finally located Camelot there.

As a young man, Mr Parham had tramped "by Land's End and along here and so on to Tintagel" with Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur* in his knapsack. At Land's End he had mused: "I looked across at the sunset and I dreamt of the lost cities and palaces of Lyonesse until almost I could see them, like a mirage, glittering under the sun". But now, there are no "cities or palaces or knights", and, instead of King Arthur and his Table Round, there are his enemies, who turn out to be the usual Wellsian technologists, representatives of sanity and a bright future for mankind. If one last detail were needed to link together the two novels, the Cornish settings, and the Arthurian legend, it is surely the name of the industrial chemist who foils Parham, but dies in this last battle – it is Camelford.

Notes

(1) J R Hammond *An H G Wells Companion* (London 1979)
(2) *Beowulf* Trans. David Wright (London, 1970)
(3) Inscription on the Slaughter Bridge Stone
(4) R Hunt *Popular Romances of the West of England* (London 1916)
(5) F J North *Sunken Cities* (Cardiff 1957)

The Light of Logres *Pamela Constantine*

• *Another article from XXIV/3, this one from poet and writer Pamela Constantine*

King Arthur is said to lie sleeping in many places of the world. The Grail is similarly reputed to lie below ground here and abroad. These in essence more truly rest in the nature of humankind, like so many buried qualities of our trueness, to be drawn into the light of consciousness once more.

Symbols cannot replace essence. King Arthur's earthly atoms may be reclining beneath the soil of Wales, France or Glaston, and the Grail likewise; but their essential meaning waits to be woken in each one of us as we respond to the reality behind the example.

It has been said that if King Arthur was historically active in 500 AD then he could scarcely have been active in the various districts that claim him hundreds of years later. This is true. Historically, he could not. But the fundamental amalgam of spiritual qualities he embodied and made uniquely his is not restricted by time: qualities to which all might attain when the race really matures.

Why, then, should we not accept King Arthur in this greater sense: a being of individual worth, at work across the centuries to the measure that his essential nature has awoken in the minds and hearts of other dedicated people?

King Arthur *does* exist. He only sleeps in human consciousness until the Arthurian qualities of valour, chivalry and respect for the feminine, reawaken in human realms. And since such a spirit is all giving, why should we not also become as he, with our twelve good knights of vital quality to round out our nature in genuine human service, so to lift human consciousness back into the light of Logres again?

Some might say that this is already taking place, as humanity moves towards its coming of age with the ushering in of the twenty first century. True, the number is small but history demonstrates that it has always been the few, joined as one, who turned the destiny of nations. Surely we have all, just when the nadir of despair concerning the state of human nature, been revived by news of some deed of derring-do, some act of great selflessness or bravery, some extraordinary achievement of love and kindness demonstrated by a seemingly ordinary individual? Oh yes, Arthur's spirit lives on!

For those with eyes to see, the 'knights of old' are being reborn through the hearts and minds of all who are active in their concern for the manifestation of a true humanity, living with commitment to an order of greater justice, compassion and loving kindness. The light of Logres was not annihilated when human consciousness sank into the long night of the soul. Dawn has broken. We journey on to race adulthood – the Arthurian level of all mankind! ☙

Simon Rouse's evocative cover for the Sleeping Lord edition, XXIV/3 (Summer 1994) was one of a long line of stylish designs combining Celtic interlace patterns with images relevant to that issue's theme.

The Sleeping Hero in Celtic Tradition *Thornton B Edwards*

• *Folklorist Edwards' re-published paper appeared in XXIV/3 before the chough re-established itself in Cornwall.*

The motif of the national hero asleep in a cave from which he is waiting to rise is not confined to the Celtic nations alone. Similar legends exist elsewhere. In Brazil there is Sebastiano, in Greece there is the Emperor Constantine waiting to redeem Constantinople from the Turks. King Marko and Barbarossa are other sleeping warriors. Yet the Brythonic and Goedelic traditions are clearly distinct. This is because of three basic reasons: their common Celtic heritage, their common subjugation and especially their common Christian background. This is significant since the Celtic sleeping warrior shares many characteristics with the coming Messiah.

Arthur

In both Celtic traditions there are two discernible strands: an older original Celtic strand and a later tradition which is often intermingled with the former. In the older tradition the central figure of Brythonic legend is Arthur. In many senses he is depicted as Christ-like. One anonymous quote in *Annales Cambriae* states that at the Battle of Badon he carried the cross for three days and nights to bring victory. Like Christ, his last battle of Camlan (an anti type of Calvary) meant the overthrow of the enemy Medrod/Modred (Satan). Moreover, the final death does not come. The word most often used to describe Arthur's 'death' is not *marwolaeth* (death) but *ymadawlad* (departure). Legend asserts that Arthur did not really die.

After being mortally wounded by an arrow at Bwlch y Saethau, Arthur was taken to Morgan the enchantress to be healed; and he was led in a boat to Ynys Avallon (the Isle of Apples). Here there may well be a parallel between this land and Emain Abhlach (Emain of the Apples) in Irish tradition – a paradise which Bran had searched for. Henceforth, just as Christ was entombed before his resurrection, so Arthur was believed to have stayed in a cave to sleep until his return. Many of these *ogofeydd Arthur* (caves of Arthur) have been located in different places in Wales *eg* Pontneddfechan and Ystradyfodwg. In Scotland there are caves and in the north of England too (one must remember that the 'Old North' was originally Celtic). Likewise at Cadbury Castle, Somerset, another cave exists. Again it must be pointed out that much of the West Country originally belonged to the old Celtic Kingdom of Dewnans before it was limited to its present 'duchy' size of Kernow (Cornwall). Even in Brittany the grave of Arzhur is believed to be under a 'dolmen' at Trebeurden.

Of all these sites the most famous is Glastonbury. Here, to dispel those 'subversive' legends, Henry II exhumed two corpses supposed to he Arthur and his queen Gwenhwyfar. Yet the legend survived.

In *Englynion y Beddau* (*c* 1250) it is written that Arthur's grave will not be found until Judgement Day. The Cornish Arthur was more difficult to exhume. For the Cornishman believes that Arthur's spirit now resides in the body of the Cornish chough. Interestingly, this bird is known In Welsh as *brân Gernyw* (the crow of Cornwall),

Goedelic tradition

In Goedelic tradition Arthur is relegated to a minor champion. The principal subject of prophetic legend in Irish lore is Fionn Mac Cumhaill. Like Arthur (with Medrod) and Christ (with Judas) Fionn 'died' at the hand of his friends – his own Fianna at Brea. While still mortally wounded he threw a flat stone into the ford Áth Liag Fion which, according to prophecy, will be found on a Sunday morning. This is reminiscent of how Arthur instructed Bedwyr to throw his sword 'Caledfwlch' back into the lake. Indeed it is interesting that in Irish mythology this sword occurs as *caladcholg* or *caladbolg*. Yet it is the sword of Fergus Mac Roth (Fionn's sword was Mac an Lúin).

In Irish mythology Fionn also sleeps in a cave waiting to rescue his people (*cf* Fingal's Cave in Scotland). In the Irish tales in particular, Christian embellishments are apparent. Peter Berresford Ellis talks of 'an odd Christian veneer' which is often seen. For example, in *Immram Brain* (Voyage of Bran Mac Febal), an interpolation by a Christian scribe talks of Christ's coming as a redeemer. Other messianic parallels can be seen in the person of Nera, Ailill's warrior who was captured protecting Cruachan. He will be released on Judgement Day. Likewise an Armageddon is to be seen in the Valley/Dike of the Black Pig between Drogheda and Bandoran where the Irish will defeat their enemies at the greatest of battles. Moreover, Mongan is depicted as a reincarnated Flonn – but the ultimate redeemer is yet to come.

Two strands of a later tradition are also detectable in Welsh legend. For instance, later embellishments are seen in the Arthurian tales. John Rhys includes the legend of a shepherd disturbing Arthur's cave in Snowdon and leaving terrified without the treasure. J Mac Dougall tells an almost identical legend about the Fians (Finglians) who slept at the Smith's Rock in the Isle of Skye. Even Merlin becomes enclosed in a cave for love.

Y Mab Daragon

In Wales other figures usurped Arthur's position as *y mab darogan* or 'son of prophecy'. This title was applied by the *brudiwr* (prophetic poet) in their *canu brud* (vaticinatory verse) to Owain Llawgoch (whose cave was at Llandybie) and Llywelyn ein Llyw Olaf. Indeed the poet's function was often prophetic and political. In Irish, for instance, the word *file* (poet) is related to *féill* (forecaster) and a cognate with Welsh *gweld* (to see) – hence a 'seer'. Even the storyteller, as Robin Gwyndaf explains, had a similar role. *Cyfarwyddwr* means 'director', 'instructor'; and the task of the *ystoriwr* was to convey *ystyr* (meaning). Owain Glyndwr was actually acclaimed in his own life time. Similarly, the *Cronica Glyndwr* writes that he did not die; and even today his name has strong connotations – such as in the equally elusive Meibion Glyndwr (Sons of Glyndwr).

Apart from Owain other persons were regarded as the *mab darogan* or *daroganwr*. The most tragic was Harri Tudur, the Antichrist of Welsh prophecy who repaid the Welshman at Bosworth with the Act of Union and massacre of An Gof and 2,000 brother Cornishmen at Blackheath.

The later Irish legends also show a definite historical element. The prophecies of Fionn are echoed in Gerald (Gearóid Iaria) Fitzgerald, 3rd Earl of Desmond (1525-86). He waits in a cave under Lough Gur, riding his stallion every seven years. He too will rise. There is

conflation and assimilation with almost identical legends of the Earls of Kildare, the O'Donnells of Ulster and Dónan Ó Donnchú. Dr DáithfÓhÓgáin believes these legends to be borrowed from the European legend of Emperor Frederick II. Maybe it is vice versa. Could the European legend have borrowed from the earlier Celtic legends of Arthur and Fionn?

The chough

To close, I would like to return to the Cornish equivalent of the sleeping hero – the chough or *palores*. Dr Pat Monaghan in 'Operation Chough' writes 'with respect to its current distribution in Britain, the chough can truly be said to be the bird of the Celtic Fringe'. He is right. If we look at the map we see that it is not found in England but only in the Celtic nations – and only in those parts where the culture is not dormant: in the Irish Gaeltachtaf, the Scottish Gaidhealtachd, the Welsh Fro Gymraeg, the Brezhonegva in Brittany and even in the Isle of Man. Ironically, it no longer exists in Cornwall. Attempts have been made to reintroduce it from elsewhere *eg* Morocco but with little success. To stay it must return by itself. When? In the wake of the new Cornish revival maybe quite soon. For the chough, like the sleeping hero, will wake only when 'the time is ripe' – perhaps when the voices that wake him will all speak a language he understands – a Celtic language! ☙

Gobeithaw a ddaw ydd wyf. 'My hope is on what is to come.' – Siôn Cent (*fl.* early 15th cent)

Jung and the Sacred Bear *Brendan McMahon*

• *The author of this piece in XXIV/4 is a practising psychotherapist in Derbyshire, a writer of many articles and papers on therapy and Celtic myth, a poet and a university teacher.*

Charles Evans-Günther's excellent short account of Arthur's connections with the sacred bear (*Pendragon* XXIV/3) raises many fascinating questions. It is now many years since an etymological link between Arthur's name and old Celtic *artos* 'bear' was first suggested, and many Welsh and Irish personal and place names are derived from this root. As Anne Ross pointed out in her lecture, the existence of bear deities among the ancient Celtic peoples is reasonably well attested, and, though deities such as the Gaulish Artaius (who was also a culture hero, who stole pigs and a cauldron from the gods, in order to give them to mankind, must have been part of a developed body of myth, most of their stories are lost. The folklore of the Celtic peoples, moreover, shows no trace of the sacred paw print; it is many centuries since the demise of the last native British bears, and folk tales concerning them would soon have lost their relevance and followed them into oblivion: where therefore, could we find a text to help us to understand the significance, at a psychological level, of the sacred bear?

Jung, in volume 9 of his collected works, recounts the following dream, which was told to him by a patient in analysis:

'We go through a door into a tower like room, where we climb a long flight of steps. On one of the topmost stops I read an inscription. The steps end in a temple, situated on the crest of a wooded mountain, and there is no other approach. It is the shrine of Ursanna,

the bear goddess and mother of God in one. The temple is of red stone. Bloody sacrifices are offered there. In order to enter the temple precincts one has to be transformed into an animal, a beast of the forest... On the altar in the middle of the open space there stands a moon bowl, from which smoke or vapour continually rises. There is also a huge image of the goddess, which cannot be seen clearly'.

In psychoanalytic thought dream and myth are closely related, in their use of symbolic language, and in their ability to communicate and condense many levels of meaning simultaneously. Thus, while this dream undoubtedly contains significances that are personal to the dreamer/patient, it may also tell us something of the sacred bear. Jung, on the basis of his research into myth, and in the analysis of many dreams of this type, concluded that the bear represents the dangerous, chthonic elements of the psyche which threatens to destroy the self. In this particular dream the bear goddess stands for the destructive aspect of the feminine, what Jung calls 'the all devouring Terrible Mother'. Paradoxically, the dreamer/hero must himself be transformed into a 'beast of the forest' in order to re enter the womb, the 'temple precincts', and achieve symbolic rebirth, this creative, generative function of the goddess balances her destructiveness, the 'bloody sacrifices'. The reincarnation of the soul was, of course, a fundamental tenet of ancient Celtic religion, and was attributed particularly to the Druids. The function of the hero is to destroy the dangerous beast which threatens both his community and his psychological integrity. Jung cites an episode from *Hiawatha* in which the protagonist, Modjekeewis, slays a mystic bear to secure possession of a magic belt:

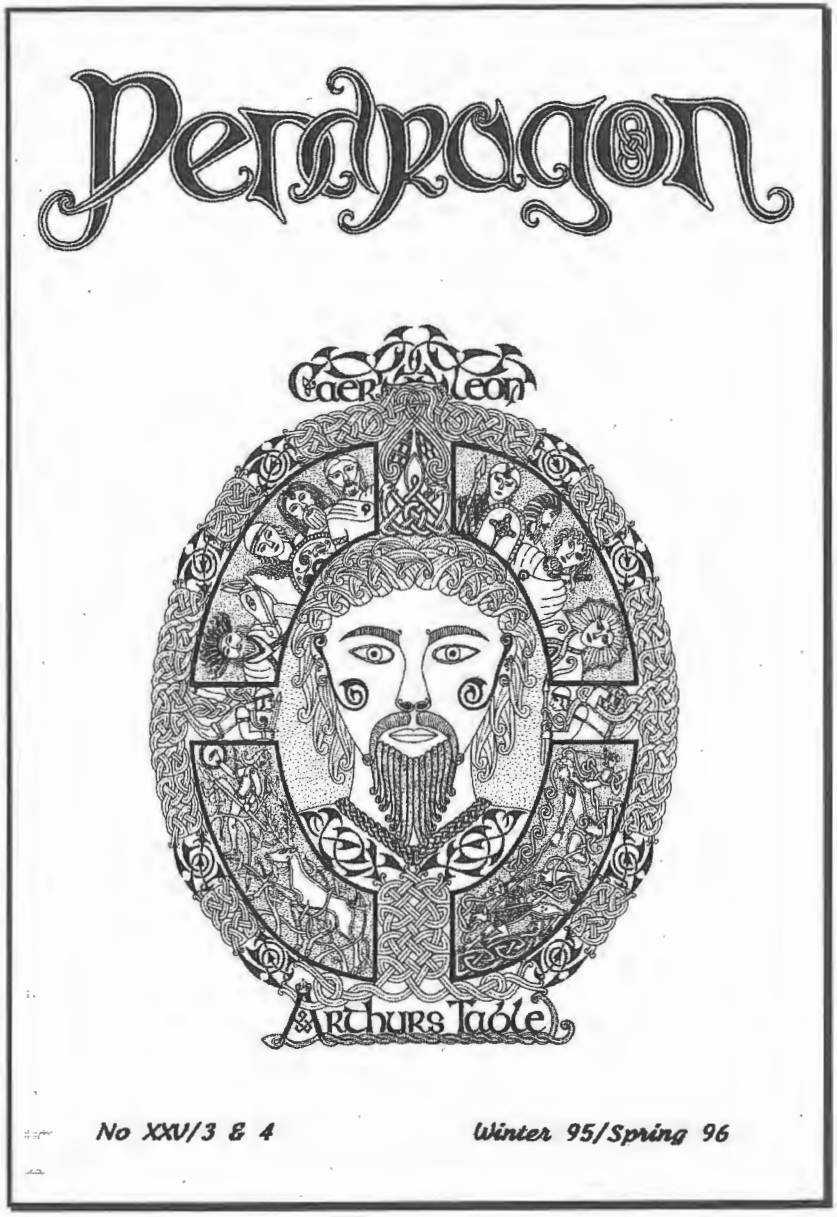
> With the heavy blow bewildered | Rose the great bear of the mountains,
> But his feet beneath him trembled | And he whimpered like a woman.'

Here, the hero destroys his feminine self, the 'Terrible Mother', in order to achieve a new selfhood in the form of a magic belt.

But Arthur is not a hero of this type, nor a bear slayer; he is the sacred bear. He has dared to accept the feminine in both its destructive and creative aspects, and so transcend the stereotypical maleness of the hero. In doing so he is transformed into a symbol of the cosmic order, and of the ideal human society, in which men and women live in generative harmony. This accords with the traditional view of Arthur, the defender of Romano-British Christian civilisation (the cosmic order) against the destructive forces of Saxon barbarism. It may even be that, by identifying with the sacred bear (becoming a 'beast of the forest') Arthur acquires the power to be reborn ('enter the temple precincts') as many have believed. If this is so, then it may indicate, in the original lost mythos of the sacred bear, some redemptive element which has fed into later constructs, such as the sleeping Lord and, of course, the Christian resurrection, to produce the legend of the *ymadawiad*, or departure, of the Once and Future King.

I must at this point declare a special interest. My own name, McMahọn, is a corrupt form of the Irish MacMath Ghamhain, 'son of the bear's son'. I am myself a descendant of the sacred bear!

☙❧



The inspiration for XXV/3 & 4 by author and artist Anthony Rees was Caerleon's Roman amphitheatre, often dubbed King Arthur's Round Table

The Irish Connection: the Irish Merlin *Ronan Coghlan*

• *Ronan Coghlan, best known for his invaluable* The Encyclopaedia of Arthurian Legends, *kindly provided these notes for XXV/2.*

Many people do not realise that Merlin has a counterpart in Irish literature. By Merlin I do not mean the sage counsellor of Arthur, but rather the Mad Merlin of Welsh tradition who, having seen some prodigy in the sky at a battle, went insane and lived as a wildman in the forest. The Irish character is King Suibhne (pronounced *sween yeir*, anglicised Sweeney). He is almost certainly a fictitious personage. His story occurs in *Buile Suibhne Geilt*. Our current full text dates from the 12th Century, but the story was first written three centuries earlier. The word *geilt*, 'madman' used of Suibhne is perhaps derived from *(g)wyllt*, the Welsh word which describes Merlin.

The tale says that Suibhne, was king of Dal nAraidhe in Ulster and one day he was disturbed by the tintinabulations of the bell of St Ronan, who was in the clericking business. Suibhne rushed out angrily, but his wife grabbed his cloak to restrain him. This came away in her hands, so, naked, he ran to the saint, seized his psalter and flung it into a lake.

He was carrying off the saint when he was summoned to assist his overlord, King Congal, in battle. St Ronan was somewhat piqued at his treatment and cursed Suibhne, so that he would wander through the world naked – and, bearing in mind the rigours of the Irish climate, this was no small punishment. A kindly otter returned the saint's psalter, but there was worse to come. Before the battle, St Ronan turned up to bless King Congal's army by sprinkling it with holy water. Some of this hit Suibhne, so he flung a spear, hitting one of the saint's followers. He threw a second spear at St Ronan, but it broke against the saint's bell. The saint now prayed that Suibhne might fly through the air and die of a spear cast.

During the ensuing battle, Suibhne looked skyward and, seeing everything swirling about, went mad and took to the trees. Whether he was actually endowed with wings or flew winglessly like Superman or even swung like Tarzan, we cannot tell. He came to dwell in Glen Bolcáin, which was probably in Co Antrim, but was later identified with the Madman's Glen in Co Kerry. He heard that his wife, Eorann, had gone to live with another man, so he went and spoke to her, while a throng of onlookers onlooked. At first he upbraided her, but then advised her to stay with her new *inamorato*. He returned to the woods, but, on learning of the death of his parents and son, he fell from a tree in grief and was tied up by his kinsman Loingseachán, who brought him home.

His sanity restored, he became King of Dal nAraidhe once more. However, a hag, who doesn't seem to have been too stable herself, asked him to jump about as he had done in the forest. When he did so, his madness came back and he and the hag went jumping off into the distance, the hag eventually failing over a cliff.

Suibhne went to Britain for a while, where he did a kind of double act with a Scottish lunatic named Alladhán. The latter drowned himself and Suibhne, returning home, was told by Eorann, that, if he wasn't prepared to settle down and stay with her in the manner

expected of husbands, he could push off because the whole business was causing a great deal of embarrassment to her. Off he went again, hither and yon, until his misery restored his sanity. St Ronan prayed that he should not return lest he persecute the church and he was set upon by spectres who sent him reeling off into the distance.

Eventually he settled in Co Laois, where he used to visit St Moling. Moling's cook's wife used to feed Suibhne each day by making a hole in a cowpat and filling it with milk. This made the cook jealous – where would it all lead? He well knew that milk in cowdung today could lead to hanky panky tomorrow, so he speared Suibhne who received the last rites from St Moling before he expired.

The similarities of this tale to the Merlin/Lailoken saga must be clear to all who are familiar with the latter and the evidence would seem to indicate that the Irish story was based upon the Welsh. There has been a modern rendering or rather development of the theme in Flann O'Brien's novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939). ☙

The Grail in Wales: the Nanteos Cup *Fred Stedman-Jones*

• *Fred has been a student of the Nanteos Cup for many decades; this updated article appeared in XIII/3 (Spring 1997), one of three issues edited by Charles Evans-Günther, and is almost the last word on the legends that have accumulated around the relic.*

For many years a small wooden bowl, famed for its miraculous healing powers, was kept by the Powell family of Nanteos in Mid-Wales. It was originally known in Wales as the *Phiol Sanctaid Ystrad Fflur* (The Holy Cup of Strata Florida) after the Cistercian Abbey of the Vale of Flowers. Later it became the Tregaron Healing Cup – the Tregaron Estate was originally part of the Abbey lands. Now it is known to all as the Nanteos Cup. It is a small bowl in form but it has always been known as a 'cup' or *cwpan*.

Nanteos, the Brook of the Nightingale, is a Georgian mansion set in a large and lonely park in the valley of the Paith, two and half miles from Aberystwyth. The Powells, an ancient Welsh family, were from Llechwedd Ddyrys, a house on the other side of the valley, now vanished without trace. In 1690 William Powell married Averina le Brun, heiress of the Nanteos Estate and since nine generations have lived there. The last of the Powells was Margaret, she died in 1951 aged 89. Her will was contested and the Cup was lodged in a bank for several years before Mrs Mirylees, a grand niece, inherited. She moved away from Nanteos in 1967, taking the Cup with her; a replica was on show there subsequently and this may have misled visitors into thinking it was still there. Since then the house has had several owners but is now a hotel, restaurant and conference centre following extensive restoration. Inquiries are still received by the staff at Nanteos but the television programme revealed that their knowledge of the Cup's history is as confused as the many articles that have been written about it over the past century. The aim of this article is to present a brief but accurate account which I hope to expand into a full length illustrated book.

There are several 'traditions' concerning the Cup. The best known is that it is the Holy Grail, the Cup of the Last Supper, and that it was taken to the Cistercian Abbey of Strata

Florida by seven monks from Glastonbury at the time of the Dissolution, 1539. On the approach of Thomas Cromwell's commissioners the monks fled 15 miles over the 'impassable mountains' and found sanctuary at Nanteos, as servants of the Powells. On his deathbed the last monk entrusted the Grail to the family "until such time as the Church shall claim her own".

The story is obviously set into conventionalised folklore patterns. We see an idealised picture of human conditions: poor saintly grail bearers wandering through a threatened mountain region pursued by evil persecutors, agents of a despotic king. They are given protection and noble patronage and live out anchorite lives, exiled from the world in holy poverty. Their duties done they are buried in unmarked graves but the relic associated with them becomes a prized possession – the power flows on. The story is fully euhemerized in Isabel Hill Elder's *The Cup of the Last Supper*. The insistence on the number seven is interesting: it brings to mind the seven survivors in the story of Bran who journey through Wales with their beloved king's head.

The 'tradition' ignores the complex political events of 1530-39. Affairs moved too swiftly and unexpectedly for anyone to have foreseen where such a relic might be taken for safety – certainly not to another abbey! Strata Florida, classified as a 'minor' house, should have closed in 1535 but Abbot Talley paid a large delaying fine. It was visited in 1536 and a detailed inventory made by the King's commissioners. Whiting of Glastonbury had been assured in 1538 that his abbey would not be appropriated but commissioners arrived there on the 19th September without notice to arrest the old Abbot. He was hanged, drawn and quartered on the Tor on November 15th.

Professor Treharne's comments are apt: "Why ... the monks of a great Benedictine Abbey in England should have sent so precious a treasure as the Grail (supposing them to have had it) to a small and, by that time, very decadent Welsh Cistercian Abbey having no known connection with Glastonbury, it is difficult to imagine."

The journey to Wales through robber infested country would have been sheer lunacy for a party of innocent monks and their attempts to cross the fearful wasteland of Mid-Wales (the 'Green Desert') is terrifying to contemplate. It would have been more sensible to have taken a ship to Ireland or the Continent.

A corroborative detail sometimes added to the story is that the monks rested overnight in the remote church at Ozleworth in the Cotswolds and there is a brass tablet in the church telling how the Grail was placed in a niche in the tower. The present vicar assures me he has never heard of any such notice, two previous incumbents knew of a 'vague' tradition.

If the monks ever got to Strata Florida they must have had a shock for the Stewardship and the Court of the Abbey were in lay hands even before its dissolution in 1539. John Stedman was agent and bailiff of the Devereux family, Earls of Essex, who held the first lease. Later he purchased the Abbey and its lands himself, but he claimed in a legal case that Richard Talley, the wily Abbot, had leased lands to his family as early as 1533. The Stedmans lived in part of the conventual converted buildings before Abbey House was built. If the Cup was handed over to anyone it would be John Stedman, for the Powells did

not move to Nanteos for another hundred and fifty years!

The second tradition varies in detail. In 1887 the Bishop of St Davids, Basil Jones, Oxford scholar and Welsh-speaking squire of Cardiganshire, gave a presidential address to the Cambrian Archaeological Society at Lampeter. On display in a temporary museum of interesting curios was the Cup, labelled "healing cup from Nanteos believed to be made of wood of the True Cross". The Bishop spoke of old traditions and beliefs of West Wales and told how the Cup was borrowed from the Nanteos family by local farmers. He described the Cup as a possession of Strata Florida, "which passed with that demesne from the Stedman family to the Powells". He believed the monks had preserved it as a relic "to which thaumaturgic powers were ascribed and conjectured that "the new lords of Strata Florida probably had some belief in its efficacy". Most Welsh commentators have held consistently to this tradition for Strata Florida lay on the pilgrim routes between Holywell and Bardsey in the North and St Davids in the South and most abbeys hoped to draw pilgrim money by displaying a collection of relics.

It has always been the ladies of the family who have served as Guardians of the Cup. In 1903 the penultimate Mrs. Powell confided to a visitor that the Cup was older than the monastery, of Strata Florida – indeed, the monastery was built to receive it. It had been handed down from abbot to abbot through the ages and in each age its secret was told to one or two: "this Cup is none other than the one from which Our Lord drank at the Last Supper". We must therefore conclude that the Cup did not come from Glastonbury to Wales, it was there all the time! It was the last Mrs. Powell who made the equation *Glastonbury Grail = Nanteos Cup*, under the influence of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, I believe. In 1938 she was seeking a book she remembered seeing at her son's preparatory school long before because she thought it contained the story she had come to believe. What is certain is the old lady's reverence for the Cup, she would not let anyone touch it unless they had washed their hands.

A senior member of the Powell family sent me the following information in 1986: "Stedman son of a duke of Arabia – a knight of the Sepulchre – was brought to this country by Richard Coeur del Lion in 1191. He brought the Cup with him from the Holy Land and gave it into the safe keeping of the monks of Strata Florida Abbey." The lineage of the Stedman family is more complex than this account of course. Their romantic ancestor – and 150 such Saracen allies are known to have returned with Richard's army after the Third Crusade – was married to Joan, an heiress of the house of Tattershall, Lincolnshire. This family were of Breton ancestry and were holding their lands in 1085, according to the Domesday Book. The Stedman ancestry is recorded in heraldry and Welsh genealogical rolls.

Six generations of Stedmans lived at Abbey House, Strata Florida after the dissolution and were sheriffs and magistrates of the county. The last of the line, Richard, married Anne Powell of Nanteos and died intestate. His estates and possessions passed to his brother-in-law and chief creditor Thomas Powell in 1747. Thomas had built the present Nanteos in 1739. Richard's coat of arms seems well suited to his possible role of Grail-Keeper.

There is no room here to talk of Strata Florida, the 'Westminster' and 'Iona' of Wales.

The history of the Princes was kept at the Abbey, and the *Red Book of Hergest* (source of the *Mabinogion*) transcribed. The Cistercians in Wales replaced the old Celtic Church in the people's affections; the abbots of Strata Florida were all Welshmen. One Cardiganshire scholar has claimed that the Cup was at the Abbey soon after its foundation in 1164 and "was the object of pilgrimage".

The Cup is made of dark wood. It was originally about five inches in diameter and three inches in depth, with a shallow base roughly one and half inches in diameter. It is badly cracked and held together with several rivets. Less than a half remains because sufferers have nibbled away pieces of the wood. (As early as 385 A.D. armed deacons surrounded the True Cross at Jerusalem in order to prevent pilgrims from kissing it and taking splinters away in their teeth.) It was whole as late as the middle of the 19th century, when it is reported that a silver hoop was fitted to the rim – but this was removed because the Cup ceased its healing.

Constant handling has distorted and obscured the patina and grain of the Cup, making it very difficult to identify the wood. Most writers state that it is made of olive wood but this has been never proved. Timber experts could probably identify it scientifically and date it from a shaving of the wood but Mrs Mirylees refused to allow this. Her pragmatic view was that it heals and nothing would be gained "by finding out that it was made in Birmingham".

In 1977 the Cup was carefully examined over two days by a group of experts from the University of Wales and the Forestry Commission. Their conclusion was that it was made of Wych Elm, if true this would cast serious doubt on a Palestinian origin. [...]

The vessel is kept in a small wooden box with a sliding glass lid. With it are handwritten receipts spanning the 19th century recording borrowings, many marked "cured". Then it was borrowed by families who left a coin or watch as a token of faith. The average loan was three and a half weeks. It was invariably borrowed on behalf of a female at that time. In 1887 the well known Welsh harper John Roberts scoffed at the power of the Cup whilst playing at Nanteos: that night he suffered great disquiet of mind. Next morning he returned to Nanteos to handle the Cup and wrote on an old playbill: "This cup was handled by John Roberts, Telynor Cymru, on the morning of the 4th of May, 1887. Mind completely at ease." Arthur Machen mentions this in *The Great Return*, his Grail romance (1915).

The Cup feels unusually cold to touch, a privilege I have been allowed. It is not impressive to look at but it does impress one far more that I had ever anticipated. Simon Appleyard wrote in 1979, "... as I held the Cup in my hands I felt rather humble ... it seemed wholly credible that it could be the kind of plain bowl that Christ would have used for his Last Supper on earth. No one will ever know for certain if it is really the Holy Grail, but the many letters testifying to its healing powers make it an object of reverence as well as deep mystery". I would concur with this.

The relic continues its miraculous healing; the present guardian has letters from many who claim to have been cured by drinking water from it. Actually, this is not possible now – instead the Cup is immersed in water placed in the glass dish in which it is kept. These

modern cures include epilepsy, failing sight, deafness, arthritis, a brain tumour leprosy and multiple sclerosis. Mrs Mirylees' belief was kindled when her young daughter Jean lay mortally ill with a head fracture caused by a fallen ladder. In desperation she held the Cup and prayed, soon after the hospital rang to report an unexpected recovery.

Following a magazine article in the 50s, the Mirylees family were besieged; 3,000 letters were received pouring out personal sadnesses and cranks wrote demanding the return of the Grail to their care! Visitors would barge into the house and demand to see the Cup. Today it seems to be known world wide; in 1974 it was loaned to the Sangreal Foundation in Dallas Texas. Large sums of money have been offered for it over the years.

Major Mirylees died in 1979 and the family moved again, mainly to escape this unbearable pressure for Mrs Mirylees felt the responsibility of the Cup to be a heavy one. She did not wish to deny its healing to those who believe but her own privacy had to be preserved. When I called I was received with patience and understanding, and I was deeply grateful to Mrs Mirylees for answering my questions and allowing me to hold the Cup. Since then the present guardian has been equally kind and I have promised not to reveal her whereabouts, in true Grail tradition the Cup is not lost but hidden and must be the object of a personal quest.

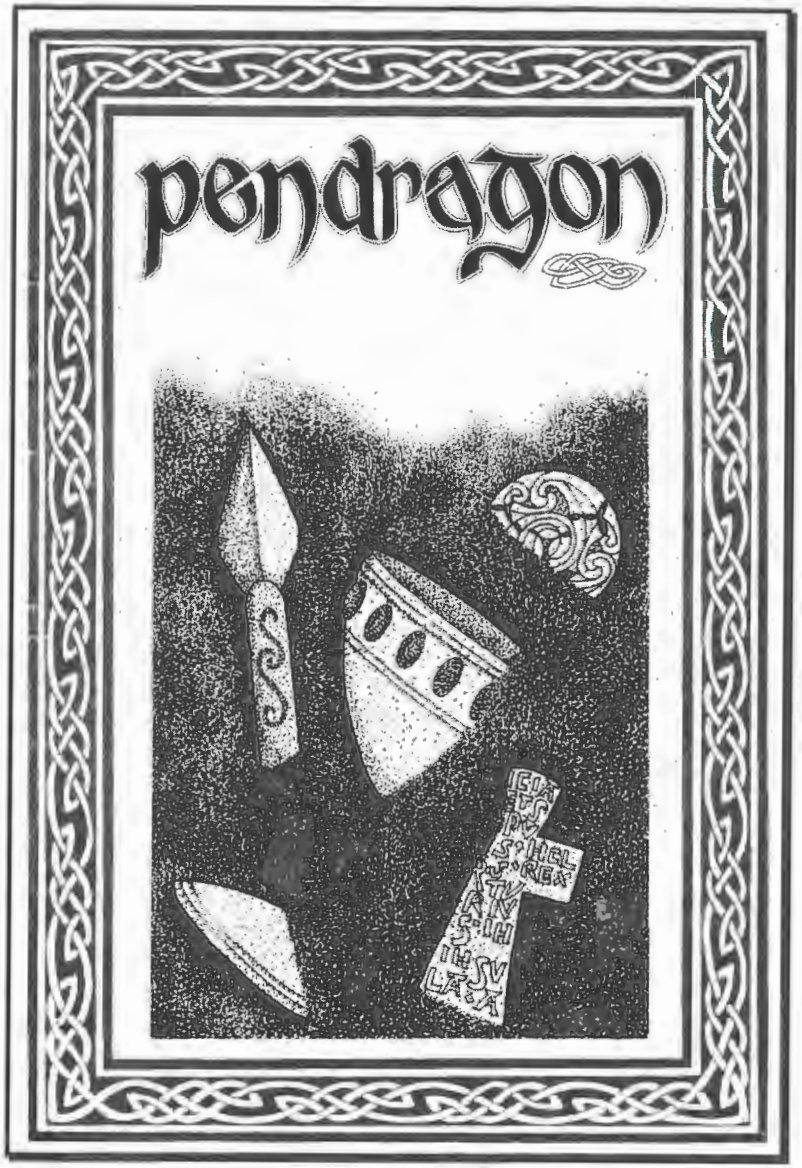
The future

The stewardship is to continue "until the Church shall claim her own". Has it done so? In 1938 the Rev Lionel Smithett Lewis, Vicar of Glastonbury, led a pilgrimage of four to Nanteos to view the Cup and ask for its return. Mrs Powell decided no. Later he formally requested its return under the seal of his church. This was done a second time by Rev Knapman in the 60s. Sir Charles Marston accompanied Lewis to Nanteos, he is the only expert in the archaeology of the Middle East to have seen the Cup, I believe. He reserved judgment, unfortunately.

"But which church?" asks Mrs Mirylees. St Davids would seem the best choice if the Cup is a Celtic relic or a mass cup from Strata Florida Abbey. Downside Abbey has replaced Glastonbury as the great Benedictine house in Somerset, its abbots sometimes bear the honorary title 'Abbot of Glastonbury'. Can it be merely a coincidence that it is built on the estate of Mount Pleasant once owned by another Stedman family who bore the same arms as the Stedmans of Strata Florida?

Would the Church welcome its return? It is an anachronism; such things shouldn't exist in the 20th century surely? It would seem to belong to a lost age of faith, when pilgrims thronged to the cathedrals, abbeys and churches of Christendom seeking miracle cures. Can this broken fragment really be the Cup with which Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, brought to this land by Joseph of Arimathea? Or could it be a chalice made of the wood of the True Cross, entrusted to the care of a Christianized Saracen Knight? Such enigmatic guardians are met with in the medieval stories of the Holy Grail.

Many say the Nanteos Cup should return to the mansion of that name, but if it is the Holy Grail, and many say it is, whom should the grail serve in the 21st century?



XXVI/4 (Autumn-Winter 1997) had this striking front by Simon Rouse on the theme of Relics, including chalice, spearhead, escutcheon and the lost Glastonbury cross proclaiming "the famous King Arthur lies buried here in the Isle of Avalon"

Arthur and the careful historian *Helen Hollick*

• *Helen wrote a well-received trilogy about Arthur (The Pendragon's Banner Trilogy:* The Kingmaking, Pendragon's Banner *and* Shadow of the King*) and a novel about 1066 entitled* Harold the King. *This essay appeared in XXVI/4 (Autumn/Winter 1997) in the Relics issue edited by Chris Lovegrove.*

Is there anything left that the careful historian can say about "King Arthur"?
No figure on the borderline of history and mythology has wasted more of the historian's time. There are just enough casual references in later Welsh legend ... to suggest that a man with this late Roman name – Artorius – may have won repute at some ill-defined point of time ... But if we add anything to the bare statement that Arthur may have lived and fought the Saxons, we pass at once from history to romance (Myers 1987).

Much of the view of "Arthur" *is* created around myth. Later medieval story-telling has clouded any careful judgement of the existence of this debatable character from the past - but is it not as unprofessional to dismiss Arthur entirely – as Myers suggests – as it is to portray him as a chivalric knight in armour, seated at his round table and searching for the querulous sanctity of the Holy Grail? Is there *nothing* left to support the plausible existence of "Arthur" as a successful war-leader of some time during the late fifth, early sixth century?

The inclination of the historian today is towards selective knowledge - verging on a blinkered view of a chosen specialisation, with little broadening into knowledge that could dove-tail into other, diverse, interests.

One commonly cited dismissal of Arthur as a factual possibility is the outright disparagement of his connection with cavalry. The very basis of Arthurian legend is that of Arthur being a leader of *mounted* men, either fighting the Saxons, or the British, in Civil War. Objections have usually included that "Arthur" could not have led a cavalry because the horses of the early medieval period were too small or too insubstantial, that stirrups or saddles were not in use, objections that automatically negated an effective use of cavalry, ergo, Arthur must belong purely to myth or legend., the later medieval period and the popular image of the mounted knight.

Is there any available evidence to prove this conclusion, regarding the use of cavalry, as incorrect?

Weight carrying ability – height of horses

By later periods, when cavalry relied upon full armour (the Knight), then the height of horses became relevant: the mean-tempered, weight-bearing Destrier was developed. It is not necessarily the height of a horse that determines ability to carry weight, but the width of bone in the leg. Native ponies indigenous to Britain, 13.2 hands pony of Welsh breeding for instance, is perfectly capable of carrying a man of, say, 13 stone, 5' 9" in height, for long periods of time and distance. Similarly, the modern Arabian – one of the most enduring breeds for speed and stamina – is often no greater than 14.2 hands high.

Were such breeds in existence during the period of "Arthur"? For the British breeds, most definitely – areas of Britain were noted, even before the conquest of Rome, for the excellence of horse breeding. Prof Ewart, in his report on the animal remains from the

Roman fort at Newstead, demonstrated that there were big-boned ponies of 11-12 hands, slender-limbed ponies of 12-13 hands, and horses of two types, one for cavalry, the other for transport, of 14-15 hands (Hodgson 1976). James Curle (1911) records that "the auxiliaries ... had 14 hands horses as fine in head and limbs as modern high-caste Arabians." The measurement of horse bits, bridles and harness confirm these heights.

Distance capability – feeding and logistics

Cavalry travelling alone, unburdened with infantry – "Arthur" has often been alluded to fighting "alone" – would move faster than mixed units. It would have been quite possible to average 30 to 40 miles per day without overtaxing animals, given good feeding and the occasional day's rest.

The *Elegy for Geraint*, an early Welsh poem that encompasses the battle at Llongborth (probably Portchester, Hampshire) refers to well-bred horses, fed on corn:

Under the thigh of Geraint, swift chargers | *Long their legs, wheat their fodder* (Morris 1973).

And in Aneirin's poem, *Yr Gododdin*, more references:

... Swift, long-maned stallions ... | *... Power of horses ...*

And *To their horses he'd portioned out oats* | *that winter* (Conran 1986).

Caesar's commentaries frequently refer to the corn supply and rations for both man and beast, as do Vegetius, Polybius and the *Codex Theodosianus*. Oats, barley, beans and hay are essential for feeding horses in work (grass alone will not keep a horse fit and well muscled), cereals known to be grown abundantly in Britain. Seaweed, too, can be added as a supplementary food. The logistics of supply of horses and adequate feeding was an integral part of the Roman cavalry in Britain throughout the occupation. Given that the collapse of the Roman structure after the official withdrawal did not cease overnight, there seems no reason to assume that the feeding of horses could not be sufficiently maintained.

Stirrups, saddles and harness

Until recently, there was no archaeological evidence for Roman saddlery, enough leather being rare, and the few finds being difficult to interpret. From relief carvings on triumphal arches and tombstones it was wrongly assumed that a simple pad or blanket was used, with the rider perching precariously on top. Such would have been useless for fast travelling or manoeuvring and for fighting from horseback.

Later evidence, in particular research and experiments undertaken by Peter Connelly (1988), has shown that a saddle was indeed used, one made of a strong wooden construction, padded, and covered with leather. Stirrups were not necessary, and would only have added to an ease for mounting. The rider was held firmly in place by four "horns" set to each "corner" – these would have been much as the modern leaping head on a lady's side-saddle, to keep her seat secure (more secure, in fact, than riding astride). For parade purposes or special occasions the saddle would have been covered, and obscured, by a fringed or zigzag edged cloth – hence the misleading relief carvings.

It is interesting that many examples of the Celtic horse bits are identical with the modern snaffle, apart from the metal, which would now be stainless steel, not iron. Bridle buckles, too, are similar to those found on modern "show" harness.

Training of horse and rider

Much Roman equine expertise was inherited from the Greeks, notably Xenophon's book *On Horsemanship*, although from Arrian's *Tactica* it seems that the Romans adapted a slightly different approach. The methods of breaking and training horses were remarkably similar during the early centuries AD to those used today, which points to some degree of continuity. Varro and Virgil (*Georgics III 191*) agree that horses ought not to be broken until the age of three, as is usual today, and that training ought to be a mixture of patience and common sense.

Vegetius states that a *decurio* of a *turna* should set example to his subordinates by being a better rider and more adept with his weapons.

Evidence that an *effective* cavalry remained in use – even if only in localised areas – after the going of Rome is conclusive from the early poems mentioned above.

There is further contemporary evidence of the successful use of military cavalry from fifth century Gaul, from the letters and poems of Sidonius Apollinaris. In 471 his brother-in-law, Ecdicius, successfully routed a large Gothic force (possibly several thousand) with only eighteen mounted men. A stunning feat, but quite possible given disciplined.

Plausibility

While the evidence of an existence of a cavalry force does not prove the existence of a leader who may have been named "Arthur", the provision, at the very least, of the plausibility *behind* the myth does lend some amount of added credence to those "casual references in later Welsh legend" (Myers 1987). In this area then, surely, yes! the careful historian can, perhaps, say more about "Arthur". ☙

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Arthur-types *Chris Lovegrove*

• *Parts of this article, which was included in XXVIII/1 (Spring 1998), formerly appeared in* Dragon, *Vol 2 Nos 10 & 11, edited by Charles Evans-Günther.*

In his youth the hero does menial tasks, but displays great strength and courage despite his humble upbringing. He defends the honour of women, but his beloved is much abducted. He gains possession of a magnificent black steed, and discovers an almost

supernatural sword under a stone. After a lifetime of great feats with a band of followers he is mortally wounded by treachery, though his renown protects his people from harm.

Sounds familiar? Of course it does – you knew I was outlining the romance of 'Antar (or 'Antara), a folk hero from the Abs tribe of central Arabia, whose exploits also ranged across Iraq, Persia and Syria. He died at a great age in a raid around 600 AD, but already by the 8th century stories of his life and deeds were being developed (Ranelagh 1979).

The point is surely this: here we have a folk-hero who flourished not long after Arthur is alleged to have existed but who also shares some similarities with the British hero as described in Arthurian epic and saga. Is there a direct relationship between them? Before we tackle this question, it might be instructive to look at another near-contemporary hero, but from a little closer to home.

As students interested in the historicity of Arthur have noted (*eg* Pollington 1987), there are some rather obvious parallels between Beowulf and Arthur:

- *both are heroes of the Dark Ages, flourishing in the late fifth and/or early sixth centuries;*
- *the historical existence of both is doubted; and*
- *both have a similar body of lore attached to their names.*

Could this mean that Beowulf is a candidate for Arthur?

Two folk tale types embedded in *Beowulf* can be related to Arthurian lore. The first type, *The Bear's Son*, has a number of motifs attached to it (Garmonsway 1980). The relevant ones are:

1. The hero has the strength of a bear due either to his parentage (his father, for example, may be a human magically transformed into a bear) or his upbringing (raised in a bear's cave or similar spartan environment).

2. Going out to seek his fortune he acquires companions with specialist skills.

3. These Skilful Companions are unable, separately, to resist the attacks of a night assailant in an enchanted dwelling, but the Bear's Son does.

4. The Bear's Son follows a trail to a hole in the ground. Despite the treachery of the Companions, he defeats the assailant (or assailant's mother) rescues princess(es) and/or gains treasure, later confronting the Companions who then get their come-uppance.

Now, both Arthur's and Beowulf histories have traces of such a tale, intermingled with another folktale known as *The Waterfall Trolls* (known also from Scandinavian, particularly Icelandic, analogues).

Beowulf literally means 'bee-enemy' *ie* the honey-loving bear. Related Scandinavian accounts call the hero Bjarki or Biarco, 'little bear'. *The first element of Arthur's name is claimed to derive from Celtic* arth, *a bear.* Beowulf has the strength of 30 men. *Nennius records that at Badon Arthur alone defeated 960 men.* Beowulf crushes a Frankish champion, Dayraven, to death in his bear-like grip. *Geoffrey of Monmouth records Arthur's strength in the memorable fight with the cannibalistic giant of Mont Saint-Michel in Brittany. This is presaged in Arthur's dream of a dragon (himself) defeating a bear.*

Beowulf sets out from Sweden, journeying to Zealand in Denmark. He acquires no specialist companions, however, and the motif of treachery, if present, is very muted. *With him, Arthur takes Kay and Bedivere who, though we know them from* Culhwch ac Olwen *to be*

Skilful Companions, are merely supporting figures in Geoffrey.

The hall of the Danish king is periodically assailed at night by Grendel, a cannibalistic troll-like monster. Beowulf alone takes on Grendel, ripping off his arm in the struggle. *The giant of Mont Saint-Michel, having abducted not a princess but the niece of the Duke of Brittany, is attacked by Arthur in a typical* berserk *fury. Arthur slips out of the clutches of the giant's bear-hug and kills him with his sword.* The monster Grendel, mortally wounded, escapes. *Bedivere hacks off the head of the giant.*

In the Bjarki-Biarco versions, the monster is a bear, and is defeated outside the hall. *Geoffrey reminds the reader of the parallel with Arthur's defeat of another giant, Ritho, who is known also from Welsh tradition.*

Beowulf follows the trail of Grendel's blood to a lake or mere. He plunges into the mere, and in a cave behind a waterfall discovers Grendel's mother, who savagely attacks him. *In the Arthurian version the final element, the battle with the Waterfall Troll, is found in* Culhwch ac Olwen. *The last in a series of tasks to be accomplished by Arthur and his men is to obtain the blood of the Black Witch from 'the Valley of Grief in the Uplands of Hell'. Arthur's companions are both humiliated by their encounter with the witch.*

At his moment of greatest need Beowulf calls on the Almighty and a shaft of light illuminates the cave, revealing a sword on the wall. (Normally, of course, daylight turns trolls to stone.) With this magic sword he kills the hag and beheads the lifeless body of Grendel which he finds in the cave. *In a fury, Arthur, from the entrance to her cave, cuts the hag in half with his knife, Carnwennan. The tale is sometimes localised at Wookey Hole in Somerset, where the River Axe issues from a cliff in the Mendips, but this can hardly be classed as in "the North" as stated in the text.*

For Beowulf, there is no princess to rescue, and essentially that is the end of this episode. *Arthur, however, was unable to prevent the death of Helen, the Duke of Brittany's niece. She is subsequently buried on a nearby island which, as a result, becomes known as Tombelaine, Helen's Tomb.*

There is no need of course, after noting the parallels, to jump track and assume that Beowulf and Arthur are one and the same person. The comparisons above are a cheat: the Arthurian episodes are taken from different sources, not from one unified saga (despite what scholars like Markale might like to imply). So, while *Beowulf* mixes in some chronological references which seem to place its hero around 500, it is quite clear from study of its analogues, and of hero tales from other cultures, that the Beowulf character has been carefully grafted into a historical context. The mythic elements are powerful, but not historic – Grendel's attack on the Danish king's hall is reminiscent of the motif of the Monstrous Hand as found in the Mabinogion story of *Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed,* but no-one would want to suggest that Beowulf is identical with Pwyll.

And so, despite some points of contact, neither 'Antar nor Beowulf could be regarded as candidates for Arthur – geography alone nullifies any possible claim, despite their near contemporaneity.

What relationships then do they then have with Arthur? If, as other essays in this issue argue, Arthur was preceded by prototypes – *proto-Arthurs* as Geoff Roberts puts it – then

contemporary parallels or analogues like 'Antar or Beowulf could perhaps be distinguished as *Arthur-types*.

This may pre-suppose that a historic Arthur existed. Not necessarily. Alcock suggested (1971) that a pre-eminent figure with the appropriate authority was responsible for refurbishing South Cadbury hillfort in Somerset. This individual he labelled as an "Arthur-type figure", thereby sidestepping the issue of who that individual was. Later, Alcock was to declare himself "agnostic" as regards Arthur's existence.

But if Arthur, as a pre-eminent authority figure, did not exist in the years around 500, where did the concept come from? Can we argue for an Arthurian *archetype*, just one of the facets of "the hero with a thousand faces"?

In other words, if Arthur didn't exist, did we have to invent him? ☙

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Moorcock's Grail *Steve Sneyd*

• *This literary note, from poet and regular contributor Steve, appeared in XXVII/2 (Summer 1998)*

The abiding fascination of the Grail theme, as offering a mediating device between heaven and earth, and a means of healing human misery and self-alienation as well as overcoming mankind's fall from its true nature, is well-illustrated by two books from the well-known science fiction and fantasy author Michael Moorcock.

In the first, *The War Hound and the World's Pain*, a successful mercenary commander in the Thirty Years War, Ulrich Von Bek, wearied of the endless slaughter, takes refuge in a forest. Here, in a castle otherwise deserted, he meets Sabrina. This beautiful woman proves to be an enslaved servant of Lucifer – the Devil. Von Bek is promised, by Lucifer, that if he can obtain the Grail, which Lucifer requires in order to ease human suffering as a first step to reconciling himself with God, then the girl will be released.

The quest involves entry into a parallel world to ours. Accessible only by limited portals, it proves a curious mixture of similarities and differences from our own. There, to briefly summarise, Von Bek, after a myriad adventures, at last finds the Grailkeeper, a nameless woman in the forest, and learns that the Grail, ostensibly a small clay pot, has meaning, and brings harmony, only to those who are already whole. Given the Grail, Lucifer accepts the task of redeeming the earth and humanity.

In the sequel, *The City in the Autumn Stars*, a later Von Bek, again a soldier, this time a volunteer in the service of the French Revolution but sickened in his turn by the Terror, flees into Switzerland. He is rescued from Revolutionary pursuit by a mysterious, beautiful woman, Libussa, who later proves to be leading a dual existence, using the guise

of the so-called Duke of Crete to pursue alchemical experiments.

This Von Bek, Manfred, finding a refuge from the Europe-wide revolutionary war in the remote city of Mirenburg – a place of reconciliation and also asylum for dissident artists, disregarded scientists and inventors, and leaders of occult societies – is lured into a search for the Grail, sought by the supposed Duke and others. Journeying by hot air balloon, he reaches the parallel world already visited by his ancestor; finds a second, more perfect, Mirenburg; at its hidden core discovers the Grail; and is then induced by Libussa, because of his love for her, to assist in her attempt, employing the Grail, to achieve the mystical Alchemical Marriage which is to reveal "all" and achieve universal Harmony.

The experiment appears to fail, though in the process the two Mirenburgs, 'real' and 'unreal', dramatically merge into one, and Libussa, ostensibly killed in its process, is 'resurrected' as a kind of alter-ego within Von Bek. Lucifer appears and reclaims the Grail to continue his own task, and Von Bek, reconciled within himself, turns his efforts to encouraging the new age of technology to supercede those of mysticism and destructive idealism, and to reconciling the male and female principle, at least at a personal level.

Though in both volumes the "happy endings" seem somewhat forced, the historical period is less fully realised in the first of the books than in the second, together they represent a fascinating attempt to provide a coherent picture of the way such an 'artefact' as the Grail could function, while around this central core there are a host of vivid descriptions, picturesque characters, and dramatic set-pieces which pull the reader along and make it easy to overlook any implausibilities of plot, at least while immersed in the pages. For Arthurians, they also effectively illumine the processes by which the ingredients of the Matter, such as the Grail, are reinterpreted to meet the cravings and dilemmas of each new age. ☙

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Searching for Tristan and Isolde *Forrester Roberts*

• XXVII/3 (Winter 1998-9) featured a discussion of this tale of the Celtic West by artist and publisher Forrester Roberts

The ancient tale of Tristan and Isolde has become one of the greatest love stories of the western world. It was so popular in the 12th and 13th centuries that poets and writers from all over Europe vied with each other to elaborate their own versions of the legend.

It is a tale of young and tragic love in the Romeo and Juliet tradition. Young Tristan arrives, unrecognised, at his uncle King Mark's court in Cornwall after kidnap and being cast adrift at sea only to rise, *via* innate nobility and physical prowess, to be the king's champion. He sails to Ireland to win the Fair Isolde as his uncle's bride, but the two fall hopelessly in love in the process. Condemned to death for their illicit dalliance, the pair escape into the Cornish woodlands for an idyllic period until Isolde is reconciled with her husband once again and Tristan is banished into exile. He settles fitfully in Brittany where

he serves the Duke Hoel and marries his daughter.

However, the old love burns undiminished and he visits the Fair Isolde several times in disguise. At length, fatally wounded in battle, he lies at death's door, only clinging to life in the hope that Isolde will come to his side. Delayed by contrary winds Isolde arrives too late and lies down beside him to be united with her lover in death.

Such is the bare outline of a plot which allows for unending variation and the freedom for each new tale-teller to express deep emotions to the full.

Of course, the early medieval writers clothed the story in the trappings of their own day, but its origins lie much further back in time. Traces of it can be found scattered all over the Celtic world: in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany; a diversity which indicates that the story was firmly established before invasion tore the fabric of Celtic society into isolated fragments in the west.

Historical background

In fact, there is good reason to believe that genuinely historical figures lie behind the legend. Various place names: Chapelizod in Ireland, Tredruston and Kilmarth in Cornwall, Tristan's Isle, and Penmarc'h and Plomarc'h in Brittany all show an ancient awareness of the story's principal characters.

Surprisingly, the ancient hill fort of Castle Dore near Fowey seems to have little to do with King Mark, but the Tristan Stone close by does commemorate a Drustan, son of Cunomorus; and Conomorus, according to a 9th-century Brittany monk, is none other than the King Mark of legend. There is also an Anglo-Saxon charter of 1096 which names a small stream crossing near Porthallow, on the Lizard, as Hryt Eselt, 'Iseult's Ford', indicating more local familiarity with the tale.

Tristan himself is variously claimed as Welsh, Pictish and Breton, any of which he could well have been. Even more confusingly, King Mark of Cornwall is also remembered as a king in Brittany. He may have ruled in both countries, for the ancient kingdom of Dumnonia lay on both sides of the Channel, and there is a tradition that certain Celtic rulers held sway in both territories. Marcus Cunomorus may well have been one of these. He was a well-known tyrant in Armorica. In the church at Carhaix-Plouguer, in Finistere, he is remembered for decapitating his own son St Tremeur, who then rose up and carried his head to his grave. This would seem to make young Tremeur either Tristan's brother or his cousin. Nevertheless, despite these Brittany connections, all versions of the Tristan legend agree that King Mark held sway in Cornwall, with a chief residence at Tintagel.

Duke Hoel of Brittany, father of Tristan's Breton spouse, is another Arthurian figure with one foot in Cornwall, for the Suite de Merlin also makes him Duke of Tintagel, and Malory refers to him as Arthur's cousin. It was Duke Hoel's niece Helaine who was abducted and ravished by a fearsome giant inhabiting Mont-St-Michel. King Arthur slew this primitive, but failed to save Helaine. She was laid to rest on the island just north of the Mount now called Tombelaine.

The confusion of so many Celtic figures between Britain and Brittany is due to the astonishingly fluid nature of cultural and religious interchange between Britain and Armorica in early Christian times. Even in 56 BC Celtic Britons helped the Armorican

Gauls fight the Romans, and the Armoricans returned the favour in the long drawn-out fight against the Saxons during the Arthurian era.

In the 6th century this rapport culminated in wholesale emigration from south west Britain into Armorican Brittany. The migrants were early 'boat people', fleeing from the slaughter, famine and disease that inevitably follows in the wake of invasions. It was a dreadful period, remembered thereafter as the Wasting of Britain.

Apart from Saxon incursions, Cornwall suffered from Irish raiders, possibly Viking settlers, who indulged in slaving expeditions. A once prosperous Britain was reduced to the Waste Land of symbolic fable, and wave upon wave of refugees sought comparative safety in Armorica – in such numbers, in fact, that it became known as Little Britain.

Like all immigrants, they brought their own legends: a colourful inheritance of stories which assimilated easily into local Breton mythology. In consequence the repertoire of the Breton bards was so enriched that their renown as storytellers spread throughout medieval France and Europe. The Tristan saga was one of these stories.

Their early versions would have been pretty faithful to the original legend, for accuracy of oral rendition was always the hallmark of the Celtic bard. Nevertheless, it was the poets of 12th and 13th-century Europe that moulded the original tale into the powerful love story we know today. Perhaps there was an original, archetypal text, but if there was it was lost to us long ago.

Development

The first written versions were in verse and were performed dramatically, before largely illiterate audiences. Later, monasteries began to produce beautifully illuminated manuscripts in prose, to embellish the libraries of powerful patrons, who would admire them for their brilliant illuminations and, perhaps, even read them occasionally. Later still, lay studios took over and manuscript production proliferated.

There are several established, early tellers of the Tristan tale, notably Thomas of Britain (*c* 1160), Eilhart von Oberge (*c* 1170), Béroul (*c* 1200), Gottfried von Strasbourg (1210) plus the *Prose Tristan*, produced in variations by different authors.

The *Prose Tristan* proved so popular that hundreds of illuminated version were produced, more than eighty of which still survive. In these, faithfulness to some original text hardly mattered, and the combinations of incidents they relate are unique and various.

Most well-versed audiences knew the bones of the story anyway, and new variations refreshed it. So each narrator added his own inflections, breathing new life into the old tale. Malory, for example, who drew many of his stories from the Prose Tristan, introduced much chivalry. He made Tristan a Knight of the Round Table, passing his time at Lancelot's castle of Joyeuse Garde, in dalliance with Iseult. In his version, Tristan is murdered by King Mark and the well-known drama of the ship with the black and white sails is omitted entirely.

This process of variation and development continued through the centuries. In later years, Matthew Arnold cast Iseult of Brittany, who was a third party in the love triangle, as the real heroine.

Tennyson condemned the sinful lovers out of hand. Swinburne ignored their immorality but exalted their passion. Then Wagner brought a new dimension to the story with his stunningly emotional music. His *Tristan und Isolde* is an evocation of a love so powerful, so unbearable, that its only real fulfilment could be found in death.

It is artists such as these who are the true myth makers, for they exalt the human condition. Like Wagner's music, their principal character soar above our lives, and limited mortals take on a heroic stature under their touch.

Topography

The geography of the plot ranges from Brittany and lost Lyonesse to Cornwall and Ireland and back to Brittany, but most of the action takes place in Cornwall. The Anglo-Norman poet Béroul seems to be the only one with any grasp of Cornish topography, and only a fragment of his work survives. However, what there is has a fine swing to it and it is fascinating to follow his narrative over the Cornish terrain today.

Gottfried and Thomas are fragmented too, but they have the virtue that Thomas begins where the Gottfried ends, neatly completing Gottfried's narrative. Gottfried and Thomas may be short on geographical knowledge, but their narrative is more thrilling and touching than most present-day best-sellers and, frankly, they make a far better read.

Béroul locates the greater part of his action in the Cornish countryside between the Fal and the Fowey rivers. He was obviously familiar with this landscape, and he may have deliberately shifted a traditional Cornish legend into the Fowey area simply to heighten the drama for his patrons. He was probably writing to entertain members of the powerful Cardinham family. Their estates lay beside the Fowey river, where Robert de Cardinham built the first castle at Restormel. He lived with his family there and his grand-daughter was christened Isolda, a rare name in those days. It could well have been Béroul's masterly story-telling that influenced their choice of her name.

It is possible to piece together most of the lovers' movements, from the birthplace of the beautiful Isolde on the banks of the River Liffey, upstream of Dublin, to her marriage to King Mark at Tintagel; their life together beside the banks of the Fowey river, and her trysts with Tristan near present-day Truro and in the woods of southern Cornwall. Then one can follow Tristan into exile and take up his life again at the courts of Brittany.

Envoi

However, the beautiful places encountered *en route* have only nebulous claims to genuine historical association. The roots of the story lie too far back in time for any dogmatic assertions to be made about locale. As the story unfolds, the places encountered along the way should be regarded rather as stations on a pleasurable journey into the fantasy world of medieval poetry.

Those who would pursue the legend in more detail can refer to the books and papers listed at the end of this article, but those who embark on the Tristan journey on foot, simply to savour the high drama of a wonderful story set in lovely surroundings and in unexpected places, will reap the richer reward.

Anna-Marie Ferguson, who provided the illustrations for Cassell's 2000 edition of Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, kindly designed the cover for the Caridwen edition, XXVIII/4 (Summer 2000)

Further reading

Tristan and Iseult: a twelfth century poem by Béroul (Librairie H Champion, Paris)
A T Hatto *trans* Gottfried von Strasbourg, *Tristan* and Thomas of Britain, *Tristan* (Penguin Classics)
The Roman de Tristan Liber, National Library of Austria
E M R Ditmas *Tristan & Iseult in Cornwall* (Forrester Roberts)
Joseph Bédier *Roman de Tristan*
Gertrude Schoepperle *Tristan and Isolt: sources of the romance* (David Nutt)
Arthurian Romances by Chrétien de Troyes (Dent Dutton)
Sir Thomas Malory *Le Morte d'Arthur* (J M Dent)
R A Johnson *The Psychology of Romantic Love* (Arkana)
Charles Thomas *Tintagel* (English Heritage)
Rachel Bromwich *The Celtic sources of Tristan*
Joy Wilson *Cornwall, land of legend* (Bossiney Books)
Cornish Archaeology Vol 24 1985
A C Canner *The Parish of Tintagel*
John Keast *The Story of Fowey*
O J Padel *The Cornish background to the Tristan stories*
Nigel Pennick *The Celtic Saints* (Thorsons)
O L Obert *Celtic legends of Brittany* (Coop Breizh)
Linzi Simpson *Archaeology in Temple Bar* (Temple Bar Properties)

A Sense of Humour in 'Jaufré' *Anne Lister*

• *The medieval Occitan romance of* Jaufré *was explored by storyteller and singer-composer Anne Lister in the 40th anniversary edition, XXVIII/1 (Summer 1999).*

It's interesting to note that with all the scholarship that's been carried out on the medieval Arthurian romances of Chrétien and his contemporaries, very few people (in fact, I can't think of any – can you?) have looked at what the romances were written *for*. Yes, of course there are layers of symbolism, layers of Celtic mythology, layers of Christianisation and so on. But why were they written? Why does anyone write anything? For an audience, of course. We write to communicate to a group of other people, essentially, and in medieval days not only could few people read but of course there were also few copies of manuscripts available in the first place. The romances were written, first and foremost, to be read aloud to an audience. And, of course, to entertain as well as possibly enlighten or elucidate.

This makes a big difference, of course. I spend a lot of time in front of audiences of all kinds, telling stories and singing. With the more specialist material in my repertoire, I find that the better informed my audience is, the greater the reaction to what I say. The people who are still finding their way through the story and still getting used to the characters will be concentrating on those parts of what I'm saying and singing. Those who know a little about the whole subject area will be following every nuance of every phrase, and responding accordingly.

This leads me to a few conclusions, because I don't think audiences have changed that much over the millennium. I think, for example, that Chrétien's approach was rather more like Jane Austen, with quite a lot of dry, wry humour, and his audience would be ready for this. They were, remember, much more used to listening than we are today – no visual support from photos or videos, no pre-recorded sound effects or mood music, and the troubadours were appreciated for the subtlety of their metre and rhyme schemes as well as the content of their songs. How good are we at spotting those today, just in the listening? It sounds to me too as if his storylines were fairly new to his audience, or at least had a twist that made them seem new.

Jaufré

When we come to the romance of *Jaufré*, however, written in Occitan (therefore from the south and west of France or the south and east of Spain) there's a very different style. It's not particularly well known to us today and relatively few people have read it in translation – still fewer in the original. But it contains a wealth of clues that the whole of the Matter of Britain was pretty familiar to the audience, as well as a vast amount of other intriguing areas to explore.

Most of these clues come from the use of humour. Impossible to imagine anyone making *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* if the Grail story wasn't already known to us. Parodies, or playful re-workings, have to follow the serious version. Again, I've read some very serious academic studies of the deeper meaning of some of these motifs in *Jaufré* – my deep and dark suspicion is that the writers of these studies have never stood up to entertain any audience except possibly students in a lecture theatre.

We don't know the date of the composition of *Jaufré* with any degree of certainty. We don't know anything at all about the author, except that tribute is paid to the King of Aragon, so we assume that we're looking to the west of the Pyrenees here. It's generally thought that the author wrote in the late part of the 12th or early part of the 13th century, but it doesn't really matter.

There's a mention of *Cligès* (an early non-Arthurian creation by Chrétien) but there are many other names preserving very different spellings, which must indicate the knowledge of other traditions as well, now lost to us. Guenevere, for example, is Guilalmier. Kay is Quexs. He has all the usual attributes of boorish behaviour, but is also seen holding an apple branch as a sign of his position at court. Morgan le Fay comes into the story under the name of the "Fada de Gibel" (the fairy of Gibraltar) – not, as far as I know, a name we find too often elsewhere. Lancelot is there, but no mention of any liaison with Guenevere. Yvain is there, but no mention of his lion. Jaufré's main antagonist is Taulat de Rogemont... Chrétien does mention a Taulas in two of his tales, but as a brave and courageous knight fighting on the same side as Arthur, so my conclusion is that Chrétien's characterisation comes later, once Jaufré has rehabilitated him.

The story

The plot is hard to summarise, because it is very episodic, but the brief outline is that Jaufré arrives at Arthur's court and rides out again to avenge an insult to Arthur and Guenevere, vowing not to eat or sleep until he has been successful in his quest. On the way

he does battle with a good number of evil beings, from a giant leper and a mysterious Black Knight to a dwarf guarding a mysterious white, gleaming lance. He falls asleep in an orchard of singing birds which belongs to the Lady Brunessen and when he and the lady meet they fall instantly in love. However her lands and the lands around are subject to a strange mourning ritual, and whenever Jaufré asks about this he is severely beaten up, so he leaves her to find out the cause (there's a wounded overlord involved ... ringing a few bells here, perhaps?) and complete his quest (these two objectives luckily fit together neatly).

On his way to Arthur, with Brunessen, he is distracted by the Fada de Gibel who pushes him headfirst into a fountain, and at the bottom of this fountain he finds himself in her country where she is under attack by another wicked being, Felon d'Albarua, and has to rescue her. Eventually of course he makes his way back to Brunessen and Arthur and the story ends happily. At the beginning and end of the story there are two "end pieces" in which Arthur is seen to be taking action against some mysterious beasts.

A sense of humour

I talked of humour. The style in which this tale is told is conversational and lively. The descriptions are light and realistic. The events generally have a fair amount of humour within them, and if, as I think, the audience was familiar with the more conventional tales, then the whole blend of style and choice of events would have been enough to raise a smile and, at times, a chuckle or a belly laugh. Let's see if I can convey some of this to you.

The opening scenes have Arthur with his court waiting for an adventure before starting their Pentecost feast. As time passes Arthur decides that they will set out to look for an adventure, as none has come to them, and they all saddle up and ride out. Arthur hears some cries and sets off alone to investigate. He reaches a mill, where a woman is in deep grief, complaining that a strange horned beast is inside the mill eating all her grain. Arthur goes in search of the beast and initially takes up a classic fighting stance with his shield in place and his sword ready. The beast ignores him and carries on eating. Arthur concludes that it's not a wild animal (in the text – because it doesn't try to defend itself!) and takes his sword to strike the beast with the flat blade. Still no reaction. So Arthur grabs hold of its horns and pulls and shakes the beast instead, and tries to raise his fist to hit it on the head, but can't move his hand. The animal then sets off at a brisk trot, with Arthur clinging on behind because he can't let go of the horns.

Off they go, through the forest, and Gawain catches sight of them from a watchtower and comes up with his lance ready to run the animal through. Arthur has had time to think by now and tells Gawain to leave the animal alone, as it doesn't seem to want to hurt him and killing the animal might have the worst consequences. So Gawain, Tristan and Yvain (who were together in the tower) watch as the animal suddenly heads for a steep rock and, at the top, puts its head down so that Arthur is dangling into nothingness.

The rest of the court catch up – Kay immediately goes into a rather exaggerated lament about the loss of valour and falls off his horse and down the valley – but Gawain has the bright idea of asking the others to strip off and make a pile of clothes at the bottom of the rock to break Arthur's fall. They do this, stripping naked in their haste to help ... while

Arthur, above, tightens his grip on the horns because, as the author tells us, he's really not keen to let go at this precise moment.

When the beast sees the naked courtiers it leaps nimbly down from the rock, releasing Arthur as it does so, and Arthur lands safely in the midst of his ladies and lords. The beast turns into one of Arthur's knights who has been practising magic and had made a deal with Arthur that if he could successfully transform himself into some other creature for a feast day he would win a gold cup, a fine horse and a kiss from the prettiest girl at court. And, as he says, he's done a fine spell to make the others all strip naked as well. There's then some realistic detail about the squabbles about whose clothes belong to who in the pile before the party head back to Cardeuil (Carlisle – next to the forest of Broceliande for the purpose of this tale) and have their feast.

So there's some slapstick (naked courtiers and Kay falling off his horse and sliding down the valley after his rather inappropriate lament), some sniggers at the chivalric code (Arthur in battle pose with a wild animal), some very realistic comments (Arthur holding on for dear life at the top of the rock, the arguments about the clothes), some smiles at the classic story features (no adventure comes to them, so they go and look for one instead) and the humour of the episode itself. This is fairly typical of the style of the whole work.

Some of the motifs I outlined in the summary of the plot will give you a flavour. Python-like, Jaufré can't attack the giant leper on equal terms so he slashes away at his legs. The gleaming white lance is so gleaming because the dwarf has to keep washing it. Jaufré is sleeping in Brunessen's orchard and she sends her seneschal and other men in her household to get him. He is still half asleep when he knocks each one of them flying, and they return to Brunessen "all dusty behind", so eventually she has to send a whole posse together to take him. Although he falls in love with her on sight (and she with him) he's still desperately sleepy and doesn't spend any time at all thinking of their momentous meeting before sleep takes over again. She, meanwhile, chiefly remembers that he's told her he'd like to hold her naked in his arms. These feel like contemporary human beings we can identify with!

Then again, we have a quasi Wasteland set up, with a wounded overlord on a bed watched over by two weeping women, and a question. The difference is that this time it's really hazardous to ask the question (you'll be beaten up) and the wounded overlord has wounds that won't heal because the cruel Taulat de Rogemont makes him climb a mountain every time he starts to get better.

I have a great fondness for the moment when the Fada de Gibel pushes Jaufré into her fountain, too. Nothing like a hands-on approach to getting help, and it's elaborated by the wonderful funeral laments that all the characters speak about the supposedly drowned Jaufré, when the listener knows perfectly well that he's alive and well below the water. Leaving the humour aside for a short moment, the land under the water is one of many motifs in the plot that have close similarities with other folktales ... again raising the unanswerable question of which came first.

Entertainment

This story, although not so well known to us today, travelled widely around the world. It

was known to Cervantes (and some say influenced his writing), it turned up in the Philippines in a version in Tagalog, and there were translations into French and English at different times in the past. There are comparisons to be made with *Jack the Giant Killer* as well as many other folk tales. It's a rich and fascinating text and one day I hope to finish the work I started to do on it, looking at all the folklore motifs and relationships with other Arthurian tales. But I think it's useful to remember that from time to time I need to remove my academic spectacles and read the story as a story, or even to tell parts of it to groups the way it was once told, because I think that's the only way I will remind myself that the author didn't intend it to be an exercise in detective work. It was, almost certainly, intended as an entertainment, just as many of the other stories about Arthur were, and it would be a pity not to enjoy the humour and the sense of mischief because we're too busy following a wild Grail chase or identifying solar heroes. My greatest regret is knowing that we will never know the extent of the material this author drew on to write this funny, irreverent romance, and my unanswerable question is whether we've lost other romances in Occitan which might have shed more light on the stories of Arthur we still have. It's good to know, though, that T H White (and Malory, too, at times) was following a fine tradition with the use of humour, and it's probably good to keep in mind that Chrétien too had his tongue firmly in his cheek some of the time. My suspicion is that, as I said at the beginning, his approach was more akin to Jane Austin whereas the author of *Jaufré* is much more Monty Python – or possibly Wodehouse. And every so often I wonder whether scholars in the future will be as full of theories about the Knights Who Say Ni as we have been about the Grail question. cs

The Swan King and the Grail Castle *Eric L Fitch*

• Eric is a writer on subjects as various as H G Wells and Herne the Hunter. His essay on a real-life Grail Castle appeared in XXVIII/2 (Winter 1999-2000).

I was lucky enough to spend a short spell in Bavaria in June 1999 and there discovered a place steeped in the Arthurian legends, specifically the Holy Grail. This was the castle of Neuschwanstein built by "mad" King Ludwig II of Bavaria in 1880s, photographs of which have appeared on many a jigsaw and which has been a backdrop for a number of films. This is not surprising, since its appearance has a romantic, almost fairy-tale quality, but what is of interest to *Pendragon* readers is the fact that this building turned out to be a Grail Castle, as we shall see.

King Ludwig II was born at the Nymphenburg Palace, Munich in 1845 and became king at the early age of 18 after the death of his father Maximilian II. He was brought up in a castle situated in the Bavarian Alps named Hohenschwangau, which was decorated inside with scenes from Lohengrin, and he was thus introduced to this legend from his boyhood. The story was told by Wolfram von Eschenbach in his *Parzival* of *c*1210, which featured Lohengrin the Swan Knight, son of Parzival and Condwiramurs. Although Lohengrin appears only briefly in this work, a later romance from the 1280s by an unknown author tells a rather fuller story.

The Swan Knight

The title of Swan Knight stems from the fact that Lohengrin arrives on the scene in a boat drawn by a swan in order to deliver Princess Elsa of Brabant from the evil Tetramund and the sorceress Ortrud. Having saved her, Lohengrin marries her on condition that she must not ask him his name or his ancestry. However, on their wedding night she asks the question and, held by his vows to the Grail, discloses his identity and promptly disappears, taken back to the Grail Kingdom by the swan who has returned for him.

At the age of 12 Ludwig was introduced to Wagner's music after hearing a report by his governess of a performance of Lohengrin which she had attended in Munich. Apparently her vivid descriptions of the opera fired an enthusiasm to see the work himself, a wish which did not come true until he was 15, having harangued his father for three years. The performance captured his imagination almost like a religious fervour, not only for the Grail legends but also for the music of Wagner, whom he later befriended. In fact, but for Ludwig, it is doubtful whether the impecunious composer would have achieved all he did, for the king financed his projects and enabled them to come to fruition.

Ludwig's idea of art was its potential for it to raise the audience onto a higher plane and in Wagner he saw the ultimate perfection of this ideal. Thus it was that Ludwig's interest in the Swan Knight became an obsession and he came to identify himself with the character of Lohengrin, part knight in shining armour and part swan, with its associations of majesty and piety. Later on in life Ludwig used to dress up as Lohengrin and sail round the lake at his other residence Linderhof in a boat shaped like a cockleshell. Indeed, after his death, a costume of the Swan Knight was discovered amongst his possessions.

In the eyes of Wagner, however, Ludwig had become Parzival, the hero of his last opera *Parsifal*, by which name he referred to his friend. He was apparently struck by the similarities between the two characters – both were strong, brave and handsome, but this was accompanied by a strange innocence and naivety. Perhaps most important, though, was their destiny. Parzival was destined at birth to succeed to the Grail kingship and his story leads him to Amfortas, the keeper of the Grail, of whom he asks the correct question about the Fisher King's wound. This act immediately cures Amfortas and frees his kingdom from the curse of being a waste land, and thus Parzival lays claim to the Grail. And so when Wagner described Ludwig as Parzival, he saw in him the role that Parzival had acted out, someone whom he hoped would be able to regenerate the waste land of Germany through art. Indeed, Ludwig saw himself in this role, as is evidenced by several letters he wrote to Wagner referring to himself as Parzival.

Grail Castle

Enthusiastic as he was about the Arthurian legends it was inevitable that he would embrace the Grail romances as well and it was this theme which brought about the building of his fantasy castle called Neuschwanstein. In 1868 he wrote to Wagner: "I intend to rebuild the old castle ruins of Hohenschwangau by the Pollat Falls, in the genuine style of the old German knights' castles ... There will be reminders of Tannhauser and of Lohengrin".

The castle became his Grail Castle, stemming as it did from the fact that he saw himself

as a Grail King and these themes, along with others from Arthurian and Wagnerian narratives, were the foundation of this fantastic, romantic structure. The decoration within the castle has to be seen to be believed and the Singers' Hall and the Throne Room stand out as the most splendid rooms of all. The Singers' Hall includes Romanesque arches, a marvellous panelled roof in red and gold and the walls are covered either with pictures or intricate patterns. The majority of the paintings are from the Grail legends, taken from Eschenbach's *Parzival*, but it would be a long list to describe them all. However, examples such as "Parzival's first encounter with knighthood" and "Parzival meets Amfortas" give an idea of the scenes which adorn the walls.

The Living Room is devoted to the Lohengrin legend and the paintings here describe the whole story. Examples include "The miracle of the Grail", "Lohengrin's departure from the Castle of the Grail" and "Elsa asking the Question". The King's Bedroom is dedicated to Tristan and Isolde and features paintings inspired by a poem by Gottfried of Strasbourg and above the exit are wooden figures of King Mark, Tristan and Isolde. Other rooms contain murals about Tannhauser, the Gudrun saga and other German legends. With all these stories, however, Ludwig insisted on using the original sagas as a base for the paintings, not Wagner's interpretation of them.

The whole castle is lavishly decorated throughout, but the Throne Room, the centre of attraction, is of special note. Designed in Byzantine style its two storey arcades are supported by columns of plaster scagiola which are painted to resemble porphyry and lapis lazuli. The floor mosaic, featuring depictions of forest animals, is composed of more than two million coloured tiles. No expenses were spared in the king's fantasy of building a fairy-tale castle. However, he did not occupy his new abode for long. He first settled into his apartments on May 27th 1884, but by June 13th 1886 he was dead.

The king's end was unfortunate and mysterious. The last few years of his life saw him enter a period of decline, one servant commenting that he was in "a swamp of unfathomable darkness", which led him to being declared insane by the Bavarian government. His cousin Empress Elizabeth stated that "He is not mad enough to be locked up, but too abnormal to manage comfortably in the world with reasonable people." There was a history of eccentric behaviour in the family, his brother Otto succumbing to mental illness, but succeeding him after Ludwig's death, although he ruled Bavaria in name only until his own death in 1916. The cause of Ludwig's demise, however, has never been satisfactorily explained.

Mystery

The events leading up to his death began with Prince Luitpold announcing that, owing to the state of both Ludwig and Otto, a regency was to be inaugurated and on June 10th 1886 this became official. On June 12th a government commission took him from Neuschwanstein to Castle Berg outside Munich, along with his physician Dr Gudden. The following afternoon the two went for a walk around Lake Starnberg, despite protestations from Dr Gudden. By eight o'clock that evening they had not returned and a search was immediately instigated. The bodies of the two men were found floating in the lake but, despite attempts to revive them, at midnight they were pronounced dead.

As to what happened to Ludwig and Dr Gudden, we may never know, but murder does seem the most likely explanation. At Ludwig's lying in state, thousands of Bavarians visited Munich to pay their last respects. Thus ended the life of the Swan-King, Lohengrin, Parzival or the Grail King.

The guided tour around the castle was, unfortunately, rather rapid and it was difficult to take in all that there was to see. But nevertheless if Pendragon members get a chance to visit this remarkable building, I recommend that they do and they will at least be prepared to look out for all the Arthurian associations which I was unaware of before I arrived. ☙

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A Tale of Two Wizards: Merlin and Virgil *W M S Russell*

• *Bill Russell's note on Merlin's status in Italian literature was in XXVIII/4 (Summer 2000)*

In twelfth-century Naples, a cycle of legends appeared about Virgil, not as a poet by as a mighty magician. The legends were transmitted to the rest of Europe by a number of writers, including Konrad of Querfurth (Chancellor of the Emperor Henry VI), Gervase of Tilbury, and Alexander Neckam;[15] in the sixteenth century, the tales were collected together in a French book, *Les Faicts Merveilleux de Virgille*.[16] They are conveniently available in English in a delightful little book published in 1893 by the famous folklore publisher David Nutt. The magician appears in a frontispiece that is not attributed, but which looks to me very much like Beardsley, who had his first great success that year in an illustrated edition of the *Morte d'Arthur*: as it happens, in 1895, David Nutt rejected this artist's frontispiece for another book as pornographic.[17]

In one of these Virgil tales Merlin appears, in the character, rather surprising for Arthurians, of a sorcerer's apprentice. Virgil constructed, by magic, the city of Naples. (The real Naples was founded by the Rhodians in the seventh century BC, about six centuries before the birth of the real Virgil,[18] but this didn't bother the legend-makers.) When he had finished magically building his new city, Virgil decided to move there from Rome. But after transferring most of his possessions, he found he had left his magical Black Book in Rome. He sent his pupil Merlin to fetch it, warning him not to open the book himself. Merlin collected it, but needless to say, on his way to Naples, he started to read the Black Book. At once a host of demons appeared, asking fiercely what he wanted them to do. The flustered Merlin could only think of asking them to strew the road from Rome to Naples

[15] Anon (1893) *Mediaeval Legends No 11: The Wonderful History of Virgilius the Sorceror of Rome, Englished for the First Time* (David Nutt, London)
[16] Richard Cavendish *ed* (1982) *Legends of the World* (Orbis Publishing, London) 272
[17] Matthew Sturgis (1999) *Aubrey Beardsley: a Biography* (HarperCollins, London) 142, 247
[18] John Boardman (1964) *The Greeks Overseas* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth) 203-4

with salt and keep it clean. Luckily the demons did not enjoy this job, and left Merlin alone afterwards.

There is another link between Merlin and Virgil, and here the British magician appears in all his grandeur as of equal status to the other great medieval wizard. In the thirteenth century there was a report of the discovery of Virgil's underground tomb at Naples: here the magician sat among his magic books *'under an every-burning lamp'*.[19] Now the place of Merlin's entombment, either by Viviane's trickery or by his own decision, is described in a bewildering variety of ways in the various sources - a rock, a hollow tree, an invisible palace, a glass castle, *etc.*[20] But one tradition makes it an underground vault that is permanently lit up.

This is the version used by Ariosto. In Cantos 2 and 3 of *Orlando Furioso*, the traitor Pinabello lures Bradamante to an underground cavern, and treacherously drops her into it. He goes off with her horse, leaving her for dead. Bradamante survives her fall, and enters an inner part of the cavern, where she finds Merlin in suspended animation in a tomb that is *permanently illuminated as bright as day*. The magician welcomes her, predicting great things for her, and the good sorceress Melissa, who is present, amplifies his prophecy, describing the glories of Bradamante's descendants, the Este family (Ariosto's patrons), after which she shows the heroine the way out of the cavern. Stuart Piggott has shown that this part of Ariosto's poem stimulated a crop of alleged discoveries of underground tombs with ever-burning lamps, some of which lamps were even preserved in museums![21] But here I wish only to note that the illuminated tomb is common to the two supreme medieval magicians, Merlin and Virgil. ☙

Dancing with Giants *Anna-Marie Ferguson*

• *Anna-Marie's account of her project also appeared in XXVIII/4*

September 2000 marked the release of the new unabridged, illustrated edition of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d' Arthur*. This deluxe hardcover is introduced and edited by John Matthews and includes thirty-two new watercolour paintings and thirty-one full page black and white drawings. As Malory's latest artist I appreciate *Pendragon*'s invitation to shine a light into the hidden realm of the illustrator, moving through the challenges, approach, and creation of the art itself. Predictably, it has been an experience in the extreme – from the power and beauty of Malory's world and the inspiring depth and breadth of the work, to the harrowing task of safely navigating such a book through the business world of the twentieth century.

It is an increasingly rare opportunity to illustrate a classic, and a heavy responsibility. Malory carries an added weight in the legend being a cornerstone of Britain's cultural identity and the distinguished legacy of *Le Morte d' Arthur* in art. The list of Malorian illustrators alone includes such great names as Aubrey Beardsley and Sir William R Flint,

[19] Stuart Piggott (1976) *Ruins in a Landscape: Essays in Antiquarianism* (University P, Edinburgh) 85
[20] Jean Markale (1992) *Merlin l'Enchanteur ou l'Éternelle Quête Magique* (Albin Michel, Paris) 145-6
[21] Piggott, reference No 6 above, 87-8

to Arthur Rackham, Walter Crane, Howard Pyle and N C Wyeth in its adaptations.

The responsibilities of the illustrator go beyond one's artistic contribution. In brief, their task is to work alongside the author, also fulfilling a role as storyteller: expanding, clarifying, and enriching the scene to say what the author has not. There are some additional challenges in illustrating Malory. One lies in breathing new life into the worn traditional scenes while remaining within the bounds of text and wider tradition. Another lies in ensuring that the different branches of Arthurian tradition that culminate in Malory, such as legend, romance and the Grail Quest, are adequately represented. Another practical consideration is the publisher's design and format of the book, which in this case affected the choice of black and white illustrations. All this surveying of the restrictions and demands can be tedious but essential with a book such as this, where the artist is easily led astray by the many tempting sights.

While I have written a short piece on the art of Malory to be included in the book, I imagine *Pendragon* readers would be comfortable in following the illustrator a little deeper into the medieval forests, and appreciate what has to be a personal approach to the courtship between legend and art. Here the illustrator leaves off studying Malory to live it, and have it breathe through the art. It was for this experience of possession by the drama and intimacy with the characters that I chose to illustrate Malory. The Arthurian tradition is my home ground as an artist and author. It was my love of this old enchanted world that led me to paint as a teenager, and while I find inspiration in other realms, times, and characters, few rival the intoxicating effect I feel amidst the fertile Arthurian landscape. There is a danger in my use of the words 'enchanted' and 'intoxicating' as they may serve to perpetuate the dismissive stereotype of the mad artist. While there may be some truth to the madness – it is a temporary release. In my experience, the brief ecstasy felt in moments of high inspiration, is soon tempered with the very real difficulty of painting the vision seen in the throes of madness/insight.

Illustrating Malory was perhaps too intense to be enjoyable. It is not a gentle story, but a giant in carrying the archetypal force of mythology which can pulse or tear through the sympathetic illustrator. Visionary art, which Malory calls for on occasion, has its own moods and symbolic language especially suited to conveying the same mysteries and collective wisdom contained within the great dramas of mythology. A particularly potent magic can come where art and mythology intersect.

The art does not always chase the text as often assumed, rather it is a dance between the two, and sometimes they meet head on. The 'Enchanted Ship of Twelve Maidens' is an example of an image just seen in a flash rather than created in my head or built by the text. It was a scene which stayed in my mind to be recognized months later in Malory's text. There were differences between the ships – Malory's draped with fabric, mine with ivy, but light, mood, and setting are the same. Given its popularity at exhibitions, I like to think it has retained some of the flavour of its mysterious origins despite being appropriately dressed for Malory.

The 'visions' were often the result of a mind rubbed raw by the demands of work. I had no life or sleep schedule, rarely ventured outside or answered my phone. Like the knights

on the Grail Quest I lived the agony of failed attempts, my studio floor a graveyard of ill-fated paintings – some stillborn, others with weeks of work before meeting disaster. Perhaps most telling was the feeling of being blistered by the demands of the work. The sensation began six months into the book and persisted until completion two years later. (I suppose one should expect blisters when living with a dragon.) I had help along the way. In this world I had the support of John Matthews who proposed this long overdue edition, and chose me as its illustrator. In the slippery realm of the artist, I had support in the friendship of fellow illustrator Alan Lee, whose voice of experience would always find me no matter how deep or entangled I became in Malory's dark forests.

The rewards of illustrating Malory are worth the blisters. The story is so diverse and provocative that one rarely loses inspiration. After a month spent with the intense charge of Morgan le Fay, the following would be spent in the silence of the Wasteland. In this way I retained a balance both in mind and palette and an appetite for the next painting. One of the most appealing qualities of illustration is its diversity in subject and mood. The artist is licensed, in fact required to travel forbidden places and paint scenes which some may consider too disturbing in any other context. The illustrator is free to create the noise and heat of battle and conjure the cool menacing air of Chapel Perilous.

There has been humour, heartbreak, and breathtaking visions, and the continuous excitement of trying to capture the beauty of Malory's scenes in watercolour. In the quietest moments, I liked to imagine ghosts roosting in my studio – from distant figures who may have existed and inspired the legend, to the storytellers, artists, and their creations that have served it. There are rewards in such good company and I feel most privileged to have contributed to a tradition so close to my heart. ☙

Camelot was in Enfield Chase *Nick Grant*

• *Nick's was one of seven contributions to the Camelot issue, XXX/3 (Autumn-Winter 2002-3)*

On the northern edge of Trent Country Park by Enfield Chase are the remains of a mediaeval moated site called Camlet Moat (TQ28809818). The moat itself is still filled with water; the enclosure interior is tree-covered but accessible from a bank across the moat on the east side. The moat measures approximately 90m x 75m externally and approximately 70m x 60m internally. In the north-east part of the enclosure are traces of raised banks which may relate to former internal structures.

Early forms of the site-name show clearly that the moat is named after the Camelot of Arthurian legend. Whilst it is unusual for a place-name to derive from a literary source, Pendragon Castle in Cumbria is another example (Gover *et al*, 1942: xv and 72). The earliest records we have of Camlet Moat are of its very end, from Duchy of Lancaster archives. In May 1439 it is noted that the manor of Camelot was to be taken down and its materials sold to raise money for repairs to Hertford Castle (Pam, 1984: 22). It is not quite clear how quickly this was accomplished, however, as in 1439/40 and again in 1442/3 William Stallworth was appointed keeper of the Chase and Camlet Lodge (Pam, 1984: 22 and 160). When therefore might the site have been constructed and named?

During the mediaeval period, the manor of Enfield was held successively by the Mandevilles, Earls of Essex, between 1086 and 1236; followed by the de Bohuns, Earls of Hereford and Essex, between 1236 and 1421; before becoming part of the Duchy of Lancaster, held by the crown, in 1421. In 1347, Humphrey de Bohun had obtained a royal licence to fortify his manor house at Enfield (Baker, 1976: 224-5). Could this be relevant to the construction of Camlet Moat? By the 16th century, the manor house of Enfield manor was at Enfield Green near the market place, the building later called Enfield Palace (Baker, 1976: 225). However, there is a persistent tradition that the original site of the manor house was Camlet Moat. William Camden, writing in 1607, states that 'almost in the middle of the chase [*ie* Enfield Chase] are still the ruins of an ancient house, which the common people from tradition affirm to have belonged to the Mandevilles Earls of Essex' (Camden, 1722: 398). A Parliamentary Survey carried out between 1656-8 begins with an outline history of the Chase, noting that the Manor and Chase of Enfield had been in the possession of Geoffrey de Mandeville in the reign of William the Conqueror, whose 'seat and habitation, at that time called Camelot, was situated on the Chase near unto Potters Lodge, the ruins thereof are yet remaining, and being moated, is this day called Camelot' (Pam, 1984: 70). Samuel Lysons (1800) notes the tradition, and adds that the moat is sited in a meadow suggestively called Oldbury, *ie* 'old manor' (Lysons, 1800: 282). Finally, in the site's second literary connection, Sir Walter Scott, in his 1822 novel 'The Fortunes Of Nigel', uses Camlet Moat as the scene of the murder of Lord Dalgarno, describing it as follows: 'the place ... was at this time little more than a mound, partly surrounded by a ditch, from which it derived the name of Camlet Moat. A few hewn stones there were, which had escaped the fate of many other that had been used in building different lodges in the forest for the royal keepers. These vestiges ... marked the ruins of the abode of a once-illustrious but long-forgotten family, the Mandevilles, Earls of Essex' (Scott, 1896, Vol. II: 360-1).

Nevertheless there are difficulties with all of this. Firstly, the name Camelot is a literary invention of the late 12th century, and only became prominent in the romances of the 13th century (Lacy, 1986: 75). It cannot be as early as the late-11th century, as the Parliamentary Survey would have us believe. Secondly, there is another 'Oldbury' place -name recorded as early as the mid-15th century, in the area to the east of Enfield parish church (Gover *et al* 1942: 76). Thirdly, moated sites are not uncommon and neither were they necessarily manor houses; there are three other surviving moated sites within Enfield parish alone (RCHME, 1937: 22; Page, 1970: 5). Fourthly, a house called the manor house was leased in 1439 on a 6-year lease, indicating that this was not the same site as Camlet Moat as the latter was demolished in the same year (Page, 1970: 76). Finally the early references to the site call it both a manor and a lodge. David Pam has suggested that Camlet Moat was the site of the original lodge of the Chase, which was enclosed as a chase, that is a lord's hunting ground, during the time of the Mandevilles around the mid-12th century (Pam, 1984: 11). However, by *c* 1420, the Chase had been divided into three walks, each with its own lodge – East, South and West Lodge – and Camlet Moat was demolished by the mid-15th century (Pam, 1984: 22). So on the whole it seems safest to regard Camlet Moat as simply a hunting or forester's lodge, albeit a very grandly-named one.

With so much conflicting documentary data, we are thrown back to archaeological evidence. Two poorly-recorded excavations have taken place at the site. In the second of these, in the early part of the 20th century, the moat was drained and the remnants of the base of a probable bridge [were] discovered. In 1997 English Heritage reached agreement with the London Borough of Enfield to recondition and clear the site. During this process, another apparent bridge timber was raked out of the moat. Tree-ring dating assigned a felling date of after AD1357 (English Heritage 2000).

Naming a modest hunting lodge after the greatest and most famous literary royal castle and palace of the mediaeval period now seems to us the height of pretension, and we can only speculate about the choice of name. Nevertheless the name itself seems to have been sufficient to attract mystical and magical associations, and a series of local legends are now attached to the site. A well at the Moat was the site of a treasure hoard and also where Geoffrey de Mandeville fell to his death on the night of a full moon (Street, 1992: 52); the ghost of Geoffrey de Mandeville still walks the area every 6 years at Christmas, accompanied by a headless hound (Ritchie, 2001).

The final chapter in this story is a happy one. Enfield Council, with the countryside conservation group Groundforce, and with the support of an English Heritage grant of £4,000, has recently restored and cleared the site and erected an information plaque (Enfield Council, 2001). The site is also passed by the route of the London Loop Walk; a long-distance path for ramblers. After so many years overgrown and in obscurity, Camlet Moat is now beginning to become known again, and that is surely what its mediaeval lords would have wanted when they gave the site its grandiose name. ☙

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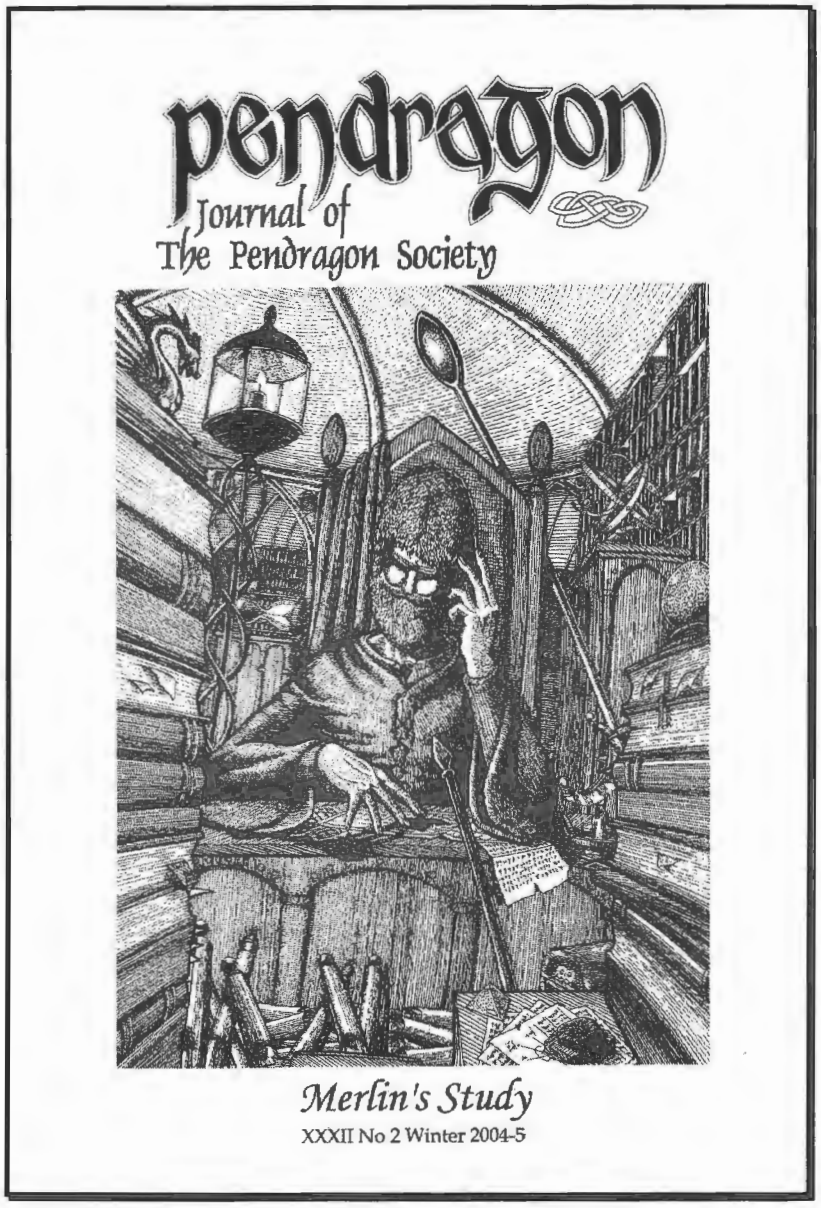

One of Ian Brown's many delights for the eye, this design, which graced the cover of XXXII No 2 (Winter 2004-5), reveals more detail the more it's examined

Arthur and the UK *Dave Burnham*

• *A historian's response in XXXI/2 (Winter 2003-4) to Arthur being claimed by different regions*

During the last decade the appearance of studies purporting to 'find' Arthur in different parts of the UK have dominated Arthurian publication in Britain. Kelso, the Ochill Hills, Flintshire, Shropshire and Glamorgan have all had honourable mentions in this parochial phenomenon[22]. Some of these books read simply as 'quests', others include swipes at orthodox 'academic' opinion and some are explicit about an anti English agenda. None of these parochial studies finds Arthur in England proper and as a whole they reflect the renewed confidence amongst Welsh and the Scots in relation to their English cousins. Reclaiming Arthur for his Celtic homeland is one of the many rites of passage severing the bonds of cultural union, dissociating Wales and Scotland from an imposed 'Englishness'.

This use of Arthur as a nationalistic figurehead is not new. In fact it has been a notable feature of Arthurian literature from the beginning. Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote in a Norman political landscape, but nevertheless had a strong agenda for Cornwall and Brittany[23]. He had no interest, on the other hand, in Scotland, which he often used as a sort of waiting room for the Saxons, who he made to either 'lurk' there after a defeat or 'lurk' there in preparation for further attacks. Subsequent French romancers, being interested in chivalry and then the Grail Quest, having a thin grasp of British geography anyway and little interest in insular politics, contented themselves with magical landscapes[24]. Later British writers, both tale spinners and chroniclers, set Arthur in recognisable places once more, often in their own areas[25].

The major benchmark from the end of the mediaeval period into the twentieth century is of course Malory[26]. There is no ambiguity with him. The second line of *Le Morte D'Arthur* announces unequivocally that Uther Pendragon was King of England. When Arthur came to the throne his first battles were with the Scots and Welsh and King Rience of Gwynnedd was his first arch enemy. Malory's concern for geography, however, is limited and the landscapes of *Le Morte D'Arthur* have that magical mediaeval feel. But he is concerned enough to ensure that as Arthur is King of England he does not have Saxons as external enemies. While most battling is between individuals or with other British kings Arthur's

[22] See in order, A Moffatt, *Arthur and the Lost Kingdoms* (1999) Weidenfeld & Nicholson; D.F. Carroll *Arturius – A Quest for Camelot* (1996) self published; S Blake and S Lloyd, *The Keys to Avalon*, (2000) Element; S Blake and S Lloyd *Pendragon: The Origins of Arthur* (2002) Rider; G Phillips and M Keatman, *King Arthur– the True Story* (1992) Century; A Gilbert, A Wilson & B Blackett *The Holy Kingdom* (1999) Corgi

[23] Geoffrey of Monmouth *The History of the Kings of Britain* (Lewis Thorpe's translation 1966) Penguin

[24] See for instance Chrétien de Troyes *Arthurian Romances* (William Kibler's translation 1991) Penguin

[25] The unknown author of *Gawain and the Green Knight* for instance sets the later action of the poem on the Wirral. Brian Stone's translation of *Gawain* is available in Penguin (1959)

[26] Sir Thomas Malory *Le Morte D'Arthur* (2000) Cassell

external enemies and sea raiders are often 'Saracens'. Although this was anachronistic in fifteenth century England the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans 1453 stunned all Christian Europe and the regular Barbary slave raids on the shore of Britain and Ireland, so common on the sixteenth and seventeenth century, may well have started by then, so perhaps a contemporary note was struck.

In Malory's English fourteenth century worldview the relations between the three nations of Britain were simple. The Welsh had been quieted by the defeat of Glyndwr's rebellion in the early years of the century and merely needed oppressing. The Scots, although relatively quiescent during the fifteenth century, were a danger and the northern marches had to be defended. But from the sixteenth century the relations between the three nations of Britain became more complex. Wales was 'incorporated' into England in 1536. James I took both the crown of England as well as Scotland in 1603. Then the Act of Union of 1707 established a recognisable United Kingdom. Thus during a relatively brief period of 171 years the three nations of the Britain became suspicious in-laws rather than quarrelsome neighbours.

When interest in Arthur revived in the nineteenth century writers made careful decisions about where Arthur's allegiance would lay. The political geography of Victorian Britain was unerringly English and from mid century the mania for all things Anglo-Saxons gathered pace. Just before the final of Tennyson's Idylls were published the hugely influential historian Bishop Stubbs wrote:

From the Briton and the Roman of the fifth century we receive nothing. Our whole ...history testifies unmistakeably to our inheritance of Teutonic institutions from the first immigrants. The Teutonic element is the paternal element in our system, natural and political[27].

Tennyson wanted to please his English audience with the tragic tale of his hero without offending Anglo Saxon sensibilities[28]. He made things more difficult for himself because although he used Malory as his template for the action, he was greatly exercised by a need to be historically accurate and true to the original sources.

The result is a sleight of hand about where Arthur rules and who his enemies are. Thus in the eleven poems Tennyson identifies Arthur as king of the Britons only twice. Hengist is named as the leader of Arthur's national enemies although not often. The people Hengist leads are referred to occasionally, but only obliquely. They are 'Heathen, the brood by Hengist left', 'Heathen of the North Sea', 'Lords of the White Horse', 'Raven, flying high'. He often excoriates them as barbarians but on not one occasion does the word Saxon (or Angle) appear. Considering he was writing a human tragedy rather than a political treatise, that he went to so much trouble to avoid identifying Arthur's enemies as the English themselves confirms his sensitivity to the issue.

The early 20th century saw little development in the idea of Arthur until the shadow of the Second World War. And it was the war that led to serious complications. T H White, in his quirky way, rewrote Malory in *The Sword in the Stone* (1938), so he too has Arthur as

[27] W Stubbs *Select Charters of English Constitutional History* (1870) OUP

[28] Alfred, Lord Tennyson *Idylls of the King* (1983) Penguin

King of England[29]. Arthur succeeds Uther (1066 – 1215!) and reigns himself, it seems, into a fifteenth century world. White has fun with Arthur's enemies but essentially stays true to Malory's Anglo centric view of Arthur's world. R G Collingwood's vision in *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (1936) was straightforward and more influential in the longer term[30]. Collingwood was primarily responsible for the long-lived mid century notion that Arthur was a historical figure, a cavalry general. Collingwood makes Arthur pan British, fighting Saxons and Angles across the length of the land and it is Collingwood's vision which, I believe, set the scene for popular interest in a Dark Age Arthur later in the century, replacing the previous fascination with the high mediaeval figure of Malory, Tennyson and White.

Charles Williams and C S Lewis shared a more subtle view of the geography of Arthur which although literary reflected the cultural needs of the war years and foreshadowed a subtle use of Arthur as 'English' that was to last until the end of the seventies. Williams' *Taliessin in Logres* (1938) and *Region of the Summer Stars* (1944) are difficult poems, unread today[31]. Both have Arthur as king of these islands, part of a Europe wide Byzantine Empire. As a devout Christian Williams saw the perfect condition of these islands as Logres – a post revelation Eden. The narrative has Logres fall apart because of the conflict between good and evil in and around Arthur's court. As a result Logres becomes, in his words, 'mere Britain'. C S Lewis was a close confidant of Williams and a great admirer of *Taliessin in Logres*. In the novel *That Hideous Strength* (1945) Lewis takes Williams' ideas further, making use of different meanings for 'Britain' and 'England' both of which are geographically coterminous with mainland Britain[32].

The focus of *That Hideous Strength* is an attempt by the forces of both good and evil to raise Merlin from the sleep of ages so they can make use of his magic. Merlin will only offer his powers to those he sees as having legitimate authority over the land. Lewis suggests that this authority rests with the 'Pendragon', the whole island having been cared for by a continuous line of powerful but secret Pendragons since Arthur's time. Each Pendragon's task is to look after the spiritual health of the country, which is both England and Britain. Lewis sees England as the creative, loyal, gentle side of the land and people. He uses the word Britain to describe the more pragmatic, efficient, cold side of the nation. 'For every Milton [English] there is a Cromwell [British] after every Arthur [English] a Mordred [British]'.

This confusion of the words England and Britain is often still heard, thankfully less often from Britons themselves, but the deliberate conflation of the ideas of England and

[29] T H White *The Once and Future King* (1991) Collins

[30] R G Collingwood & J N L R Myres *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (1936) OUP

[31] Charles Williams *The Arthurian Poems of Charles Williams: Taliessin in Logres. Region of the Summer Stars* (1982) D S Brewer

[32] *That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-tale for Grownups* (1945) was the final book of Lewis's science fiction trilogy. The other two were *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938) and *Perelandra* (1943), which in some versions is called *Voyage to Venus*. All were originally published by John Lane, the Bodley Head

Britain strikes an awkward note at the beginning of the twenty first century. Not so during the war years when frantic propaganda efforts were made to convince people from every part of the country that the nation was as one. This was not difficult as the privations and threats to life and limb were shared both geographically and across class divides. As a result the support for nascent Welsh and Scottish nationalist parties fell away sharply from 1939. It mattered little that the ideas of Britain and England were confused at this time, but after the war the thoughtless incorporation of the nations of Britain into a sort of Greater England began to matter a lot. Post-war British governments were slow to wake up to the fact that an increasing number of people in Wales and Scotland had aspirations which were different from and even alien to those of the English. But during the fifties and sixties determined efforts were made to continue the cosy incorporative idea of an English Britain.

Churchill was one so determined and he included Arthur in his determination. Castigating timid historians for not being able to find evidence of Arthur's existence until recently, he demanded in Volume 1 of his *History of the English Speaking Peoples* that historians must 'proclaim' Arthur's reality[33]. He continued: *Let us declare that King Arthur ... slaughtered innumerable hosts of foul barbarians and set decent folk an example for all time.*

There seems to be no irony in this; no recognition that the 'foul barbarians' being slaughtered by Arthur were ancestors of the very English Speaking Peoples Churchill was celebrating. This attempt to assimilate Arthur as an active predecessor of English civilisation we may see as gross bombast, but Churchill was by no means alone. Geoffrey Ashe had a go too. He was much more subtle but nevertheless attempted to claim that Arthur handed the baton of civilisation on to the English. This is from *King Arthur's Avalon* (1957):

[Arthur] left a durable achievement which no Celtic degeneracy could efface ... he had given his own people a legend to keep their culture alive. Thanks to him by the time the wars drew to an end Pope Gregory's mission had done its work and civilisation had begun to return to the Eastern Counties. Night never extended from sea to sea. England was England and not a wild heathen Anglo Saxondom: and she was ready to draw on the legacy of Arthurian Britain and make it splendidly her own. [34]

There is similar comment in Ashe's more detailed work on Arthur *From Caesar to Arthur* (1960)[35]. Rosemary Sutcliff in her excellent novel *Sword at Sunset* (1963) followed suit and constructed a scene where a British child and a Saxon child make friends during a peace conference[36]. Arthur, in one of the few clumsy sections in the book, explains that all he can do is hold off the Saxons for a few more years hoping that by the time of the final victory they will be civilised enough to make a decent society. Beram Saklatvala in his amateur investigation *Arthur: Britain's Last Champion* (1967) followed this line comprehensively[37].

[33] W S Churchill *A History of the English Speaking Peoples* (1983) Fromm International

[34] G Ashe *King Arthur's Avalon* (1957) Collins

[35] G Ashe *From Caesar to Arthur* (1960) Collins

[36] R Sutcliff *Sword at Sunset* (1976) Hodder and Stoughton

[37] B Saklatvala *Arthur: Britain's Last Champion* (1967) David & Charles

This incorporative 'English' Arthur reached its apogee with the excavations at South Cadbury between 1966 and 1970 where Arthur, by implication, was overwhelmingly associated in the public mind with South West England. Alcocks' *Arthur's Britain* (1971) and John Morris's *The Age of Arthur* (1973) were the final and grandest expositions of a Dark Age Arthur who was real, pan British and whose legacy somehow survived, giving the English of later generations what we all desire, unbroken continuity with a heroic past[38].

The initially guarded and then angry Welsh response to Alcock and John Morris has been followed up by detailed scholarship which makes it impossible in orthodox academic circles to claim Arthur as anything now but the vaguest historical figure. But paradoxically the ruin of this pan British orthodoxy in the late 1970s and early 1980s left the field open for less academically respectable theories. Since then the 'parochials' have gone to town[39]. Geoffrey Ashe was first in the early 1980s with his Riothamus, who if not geographically contained was a figure from an earlier generation than Arthur's traditional time. Then in 1986 Norma Lorre Goodrich found a northern Arthur disporting around Hadrian's Wall and Blackett and Wilson made their claims about Arthur in Glamorgan[40].

The number of parochial Arthurs found over the last ten years has been truly staggering. But I cannot see the thirst for them (or the supply) drying up quite yet. The cultural and political differentiation between England, Scotland and Wales clearly has a long way to go and the amount and geographical diversity of evidence for Arthur (however late) allows for many more theories to emerge. But although these parochial Arthurs are fun, there is something 'hole in the corner' about them. These Arthurs are pokey figures in a restricted landscape. They please the authors and the denizens of the lucky corner of Britain chosen, but are unsatisfying to the rest of us. We need grander heroes to celebrate like Siegfried, Charlemagne or the Cid, or indeed Collingwood's mobile cavalry general.

The Arthurs of the future may have a more pan-British feel once again. The fashion for suggesting that Saxon and Anglian culture and language spread across lowland Britain by a process of assimilation rather than conquest allows surely for a revival of the Arthur as civiliser of the English. And once the English (like the Irish and many Scots and Welsh) embrace European integration more wholeheartedly will we then see Geoffrey of Monmouth's Arthur revived, a grand master of half the continent as well as a king of all these islands? Or a development of Malory's hero where the external enemies are Saracens ... but perhaps we should leave that one alone. ☙

[38] See Leslie Alcock, *Arthur's Britain: History and Archaeology 367 - 634* (1971) Penguin, and John Morris *The Age of Arthur* (1973) Weidenfeld & Nicholson

[39] There are several articles, but the most important undoubtedly was David Dumville's 'Sub Roman Britain: History and Legend' *History* 62 (1977) pp 173 – 192

[40] See in order G Ashe *The Discovery of King Arthur* (1985) Guild Publishing; Norma Lorre Goodrich *King Arthur* (1986) Watts; Baram Blackett & Alan Wilson *Artorius Rex Discovered* (1986) King Arthur Research

Burne-Jones and 'The Attainment' *Ian Brown*

• *An appreciation of one artist's work by another, in XXXII/4 (Summer 2005)*

Forward

In 1855, two theological students, each with an interest in mediaeval history and customs, as well as a high regard for traditional arts and crafts, struck up a fortunate and long-lasting friendship. The one, born in Essex in 1834, forged a keen and quite exalted career in producing intricate and beautiful textiles. The other, born in Birmingham (although of Welsh descent), became a skilled and inspired artist and designer.

Influenced by, and eventually involved with, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Arts and Crafts Movement, each of which ideal upheld traditional values in art and rebelled against excessive industrialisation, modernism and sinking social values, these two men were William Morris and Edward Coley Burne-Jones.

This is a descriptive analysis of one of their works, concentrating on the design by Burne-Jones: the tapestry entitled, "The Attainment", created in 1895-6.

Design and form

"The Attainment: the vision of the Holy Grail to Sir Galahad, Sir Bors and Sir Lionel." Produced by William Morris and Company in 1895-6., following the design of Edward Coley Burne-Jones.

A full colour wool and silk tapestry on cotton warps, this panel is the sixth and final work of a series dealing with the subject of the Quest for the Holy Grail. The tapestry measures 244cm x 695cm.

The composition depicts nine figures (three knights and three angels) paying obeisance at the Grail Chapel amidst a forested wilderness. The chapel and angels are presented in warmer colours, which stand out from the deep, tertiary colours of the forest and focus attention on the sanctuary and sanctity of the subject.

The angels are composed in two groups of three which, it will be shown, is important in revealing the fundamental difference in the nature of the knights shown on the tapestry.

Three angels kneel within the chapel, adoring the Grail and perhaps welcoming Sir Galahad, the Best Knight of the World, who kneels outside the open chapel door, again adoring the Grail and perhaps beseeching the angels to admit him into the Grail's presence.

According to tradition, he is ultimately welcomed into the Grail Company and achieves a kind of apotheosis, being taken up to Heaven when the Grail is removed from this world. This fact is hinted at by the lilies which frame the figure of Sir Galahad: a flower which is usually illustrated alongside the archangel Gabriel, messenger of God.

Behind Sir Galahad stand three more angels; and it is notable that they are standing, for although they do have a welcoming nature, they also seem to be on guard: and they visually separate Sir Galahad from his fellows, Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, who will remain on Earth and live out their mortal lives (Sir Bors returns to Arthur's court, whilst Sir Lionel

becomes a hermit).[41]

One of the angels – the one standing nearest to Sir Galahad – holds two of the Grail Hallows. The Lance of Longinus, which pierced the side of Christ as he hung on the Cross at Calvary, is held on the side of the two more earthly knights, but at an angle away from their reach: it is a weapon and effectively bars their way, albeit only in a psychological context, whilst its angle indicates that they will not be allowed to touch the Hallows, although they might be permitted to witness their wonders. In the other hand, nearest to Sir Galahad, the Platter (in some traditions, a manifestation of the Grail) is held in an open palm. In other words, Sir Galahad may be nourished by the Grail and although the other knights do in the traditions feed of the Grail until Galahad's departure, they are more distant from the Platter: they are not as worthy as he.

Again, there is a more subtle, visual difference between Sir Galahad and his fellow knights, and this is in the choice of colours used to depict them. Just as the colours used to depict the chapel and the angels are far warmer than those of the wilderness, so Galahad is shown in slightly warmer colours than his companions. He is closer to the angels, both physically and visually, whereas his friends are closer to the Earth. The angels' warmth and glory are reflected in Galahad's flesh and robes (and in the hint of the blood red cross upon his shield, which can only be worn by the worthy), whilst the coolness and mortality of the forest are echoed in the tones and hues of Lionel and Bors.

Note too the expressions and postures of the knights. Galahad's is one of expectancy and hope. Sir Lionel and Sir Bors are in yearning for the Grail. They have all achieved their Quest, the search is complete; but only one of their number is truly worthy and the remaining two knights obviously know this.

Inspiration

Both William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones were strongly involved with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who were basically fed up with the loss of traditional crafts and values, along with what they saw as the gradual decline in morals and society in general, as industrialisation grew and swept across the country and much of the world (and don't forget that, in the Victorian era, the British Empire was, to many, seen as most of the world).

Perhaps Burne-Jones' Welsh ancestry inspired an interest in Arthurian legends, but this is conjectural. It can be safely said, though, that the works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, Poet Laureate, did inspire much of the nation with his *Idylls of the King* and related Arthurian works, which dressed the whole ethos of nobility and chivalry in a richly embroidered coat of Victorian respectability, reminding the people that they did perhaps come from a proud and gentle line.

Although Tennyson may have provided the initial impetus, Burne-Jones' design reveals a good knowledge of other, older Arthurian sources. His imagery, as well as his choice of

[41] It should be noted that the characters present are according to the story's source. In some versions, it is Perceval who accompanies Galahad and Bors; and in this case, he remains to guard the Grail Castle, whilst Galahad is taken up to Heaven and Bors returns to Arthur's court.

the final Grail company, is straight from Malory's fifteenth-century epic, which in turn is taken predominantly from what has come to be known as the Vulgate Cycle; a huge corpus of Arthurian works perhaps compiled with agreement with the Church in the thirteenth century.

Burne-Jones' theological background and mediaeval studies would undoubtedly have acquainted him with such works. In fact, it would have been rather difficult to have missed them, given the nature of his studies at Oxford; and his studies also coincided with those of William Morris: no wonder their work is so inspired.

The composition is warm. It is friendly. It is reassuring, hopeful. Even though it depicts the highest possible ideals of humanity (especially in a time which the artists saw as sinking into neglect and immorality), there is nothing unattainable in the nature of the picture. It is a peaceful work which welcomes every viewer. Even the wilderness is neat, organised: safe. There is no harshness. There are no sharp edges. The whole work is calm, tranquil. It is relaxing, inspiring: the stuff of dreams. And the Arts and Crafts movement, as well as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, were all about rediscovering past hopes and values, recapturing lost dreams.

Edward Burne-Jones and his fellow artists, especially his lifelong friend William Morris, had a quest of their own, to lift society from the impending gutter; and, in this work, he shows them an image of their highest hope.

Just as the Grail appeared originally in a collective vision to the Knights of the Round Table so Edward Burne-Jones reveals the dream of the Grail to the Victorian public and to the people of the present day. He believed that all people had a real chance to do far better. And he showed us that the Quest for the Holy Grail is not forgotten.

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Swords from the Stars *Alastair McBeath*

• *Alastair is heavily involved with meteor astronomy as Meteor Director of the Society for Popular Astronomy and as International Meteor Organization Vice-President; this contribution appeared in Vol XXXIV No 2 (Winter 2006-7) based on the theme of the Sword in the Stone.*

The earlier tales to mention the 'sword in the stone' episode from Arthur's boyhood clearly described the sword as being physically pulled from a stone, or an anvil-stone combination. This has not prevented more recent commentators from suggesting sometimes that it may have been the casting of a sword blank in a clay or stone mould which was really meant by the action, or that the sword had been forged from meteoritic iron. It is the latter I wish to look at as a possibility here.

Meteorite statistics

There is no question that tools and weapons were made from meteoritic iron at times in the past, though the evidence indicates it was more because such iron occurred in discrete, easily accessible masses on the surface, rather than for any perceived 'heavenly' provenance. Statistics on the point vary by source used and the timescale involved, but somewhere from just 4 to 7% of meteorites seen to fall down the ages were irons. This compares with around 50 to 55% of the meteorites found on the surface, without their arrival having been witnessed, being irons. Such a discrepancy contrasts the real rarity of iron meteorites as free-orbiting objects in space, with the fact their robust nickel-iron natures make them far more resistant to earthly weathering processes than the much commoner stony meteorites, composed of silicate minerals similar to those of earthly rocks. Irons are usually obviously magnetic too, which again gives them a distinct advantage in the 'chance to be discovered' category.

Few iron meteorites are known from the Old World countries, with their historically greater population densities and more intensive agricultural land-use, back into the millennia BC. Many more have been located across the Americas, Australia and South Africa, where population densities were historically / archaeologically less, and where agriculture was practised, if at all, on a much smaller scale. As there is no good reason to think the distribution of such objects was any less in the Old World than elsewhere on the planet, a greater use of such past meteorites can probably be inferred for those places where there were many more people viewing a larger proportion of the surface regularly. Of those iron meteorites known up to 1972, between 15 to 18% had been reheated or otherwise reworked – sometimes to complete destruction of the original object – by humans since they arrived on Earth, quite a substantial proportion. Though the reheating may not always have achieved what was hoped of it, this gives further evidence to support the fate of the 'missing' Old World iron meteorites.

Meteorite statistics can be gleaned from various sources, but V F Buchwald's monumental three-volume *Handbook of Iron Meteorites* (University of California Press, 1975) is invaluable for presenting large quantities of such information in Volume 1. I have drawn heavily on numbers quoted, or items tabulated, in his Chapter 5 for the above. Other references below giving just a 'Vol' and page numbers are all from this text.

Meteoritic tools and weapons

Leaving aside those unworked iron meteorites, or worked items intended for personal adornment, which have been found in archaeological contexts in different parts of the world, numerous reworked meteoritic iron tools and weapons are known too. More anciently, but persisting till quite recently in parts, this seems to have been done predominantly by cold-working of the metal, none 'colder' than the huge series of iron meteorites, totalling maybe 58 tonnes, called "Cape York" modernly, in north-west Greenland (albeit actually located some 50 km ENE of the Cape itself). The Inuit had been regularly visiting the sites near here for iron for at least several centuries prior to its first non-native 'discoverers' in the early 19th century (the Inuit settled in Greenland *c* 1000 AD). Objects including harpoon-tips, knives and axes are known, which used meteoritic iron flakes or larger pieces as blades, cold hammered to fit into bone or walrus ivory handles. Some European wrought iron blades and tips, presumably from the medieval Scandinavian settlements in south Greenland, have also been found. However, one of the meteorite sites, where there was an object weighing several tonnes, was called "Savisavik" by the Inuit, which roughly translates as "place of the knife material". The original fall of these large Cape York irons probably long predated the Inuit's arrival, and it seems they had no belief the iron had fallen from the skies (Vol 2, 410-425).

Other cold-worked native tools and weapons were made from the Gibeon, Namibia iron (assegais and others; Vol 2, 584-593) and the Hopewell Mounds pallasite, Ohio, USA (knives, adzes, drills, chisels; Vol 2, 656-660), so it seems the practice was widespread. The Hopewell People flourished *c* 500 BC to *c* 500 AD, and were long-distance traders, amongst other things. Their meteoritic iron came from what is now Kiowa County, Kansas, 1500 km away from their homelands, for instance. Pallasites are not 'true' iron meteorites, but are one class of the stony-irons, in which large, often gem-quality, olivine crystals are surrounded by a lattice-work matrix of nickel-iron. This makes separating workable pieces of the metal much easier than from normal, almost entirely solid nickel-iron, irons. Thus it is unsurprising the Hopewell People were keen to trade even so far for it.

As metalworking techniques developed nearer our own time, so there is more evidence for hot-working and forging of meteoritic iron implements, such as the high-quality weapons and tools made from hot-chiselled fragments of the Prambanan meteorite on Java, from before 1797 onwards. A smaller piece had already been used up here by then for production of daggers (Vol 3, 989-991). Other evidence for the reheating and forging of meteoritic tools from the 18th century comes from the Siratik specimens in Mali (Vol 3, 1134-1137) and at Xiquipilco near Toluca, Mexico (Vol 3, 1209-1215).

One notable aspect of forged meteoritic iron is that the nature of the metal tends to produce what can be superb damascene patterns in sword and dagger blades. There are some fine images of such knives from the Wabar, Saudi Arabia and Jalandhar, India meteorites in Buchwald's Vol 3 (1274-1275, figs 1867-1869). Perhaps the most interesting and directly 'celestial' weapons are the "Meteor Swords" made from part of the Shirahagi meteorite in Japan, at the end of the 19th century, apparently the earliest weapons to so directly acknowledge their extra-terrestrial origin (Vol 3, 1115).

Ease of manufacture

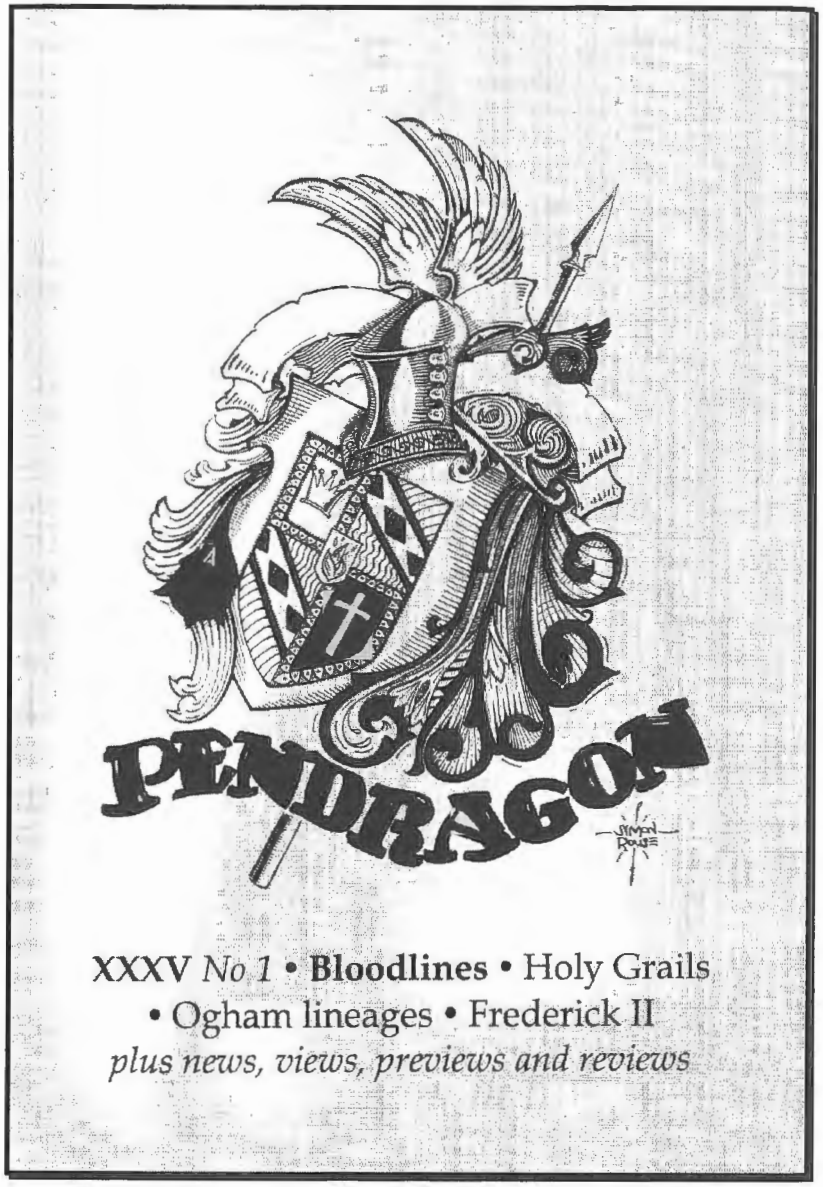
In some cases, small meteoritic fragments seem to have been quite readily retrieved and worked either hot or cold, and smiths experienced in using meteoritic iron, such as at Xiquipilco by the 18th century AD, appear to have made it look easy. However, this was not always so.

Part of the Kitab al-Shifa by Avicenna (Ibn Sina), probably written between 1021-1023 AD, and a form of complimentary text to Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, discussed various stones, the kind of material Aristotle promised to include at the end of his text, but apparently never did. One segment dealt with an iron-rich body, estimated as weighing 150 mana (about 135 kg or 300 lbs), which was seen to fall from the sky at what is now Khorasan in NE Iran, around the turn of the eleventh century AD. The body proved too heavy to move intact, and attempts to break a piece off it broke the tools used instead! Eventually a piece was removed and sent to the Sultan of Khorasan, who ordered a sword made from it, but this could not be done. This is as detailed on pages 24-25 of the English translation *Avicennae: De Congelatione et Conglutinatione Lapidum* by E J Holmyard and D C Manderville (Paul Geuthner, Paris, 1927). It does show experience of working with off-world iron could be key to successfully 'pulling' a sword from such a meteoritic 'stone'.

Was Arthur's sword meteoritic?

The description of the activity in which Arthur drew the sword from, and replaced it in, the stone, as given in tales, cannot be taken as suggesting he was in some way casting the sword in a mould, or extracting the raw iron to make it from a meteorite. Indeed, as written, it sounds much more like a storyteller's 'cleverness for the audience' trick, where the listeners / readers would appreciate how the trick could be managed before the characters in the story. In this case, where brute force fails by inadequate leadership candidates, it is Arthur's unstated, but innate, ability to 'think outside the box', the mark of a true leader, that allows him to repeatedly draw and replace the sword in the stone. The trick could have been the lewis, the small slot cut into a large stone block, into which three short, dovetailed, metal rods could be slipped, a bar passed through loops at their free ends, and attached to a shackle, which when tension was applied to the shackle, would lock the rods rigidly into the slot, allowing a hoist to easily lift tonne-weight stones. Releasing the tension freed the dovetailed rods when the stone was in place. The method was widely used by medieval masons, having arrived in these islands with the Romans, most likely. The principle is similar to that in the narrow wicker tube "Chinese finger trap", where pulling traps a finger in each end, but pushing releases them.

Before we dismiss it entirely though, swords do have a symbolic link with lightning, as do meteorites – only in the meteoritic case, the link is more real than symbolic, as a brilliant light, typically quite short-lived, and thunder-like rumblings, respectively accompany, and often succeed, the meteoric event the meteorite passes through the upper atmosphere in. So in this sense, a looser meteoritic-sword connection might still be possible. All that was missing from the original was a dramatic flash of light(ning) and rumble of thunder as Arthur extracted the sword the first time. Thankfully, this was the "Hole Kynge of Ingelonde" (Malory), not Hollywood! ☙



Twenty-five years after the publication of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* the cover for XXXV/1 (Autumn 2007) promised discussion of bloodlines and dynasties with this heraldic design by Simon Rouse

The Great Quest *Mark Valentine*

• *First published in* Book & Magazine Collector *before appearing in XXV/1(Autumn 2007), Mark's essay was subtitled "An introduction to books about the Holy Grail". An expert on Arthur Machen, he also edits* Wormwood, *a journal devoted to the fantastic, decadent and supernatural in literature.*

The Holy Grail is, as Arthur Machen, the Welsh writer of supernatural and mystical fiction observed, "one of the greatest complexes the world has ever known". Usually thought of as a cup, the vessel used by Christ at the Last Supper, it has also been depicted as a platter, stone, cauldron, bowl or dish, or as an altar. Its origin has variously been identified as Jewish, Islamic, Armenian, Celtic, Provencal, Egyptian, Templar, Byzantine, Persian, Gnostic, Atlantean or Extraterrestrial. More ethereally, it has also been seen as a shining light, the Holy Spirit, and an indescribable object that can change shape. And in recent years, of course, 'secret history' writers have claimed the Grail really represents the "blood-line of Christ", descendants from a secret marriage to Mary Magdalene. In this article, I aim to do no more than quickly survey the vast literature of books on the Grail, with a particular emphasis on the Grail in fiction.

The first definite written record we have of the Grail is in French chronicler Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval, ou Le Conte del Graal* of circa 1181-90. He tells us that he took the story from a book given to him by his patron Philip of Alsace, Count of Flanders. That book, if it ever existed, has never been found. About thirty years earlier, there flourished a minstrel called Bleheris, the son of a Welsh nobleman, who was also fluent in French and a friend of the French nobility. Other chroniclers acknowledge him as a master storyteller who knew all the tales of the Grail. Could he be the source for Chrétien? What else did he know about the Grail? We shall probably never know: nothing whatever by him has survived.

But after Chrétien, many other chroniclers and storytellers in all the lands of Christendom kept the idea of the Grail alive, mingled in with the tales of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, right up until Caxton published Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, which became the definitive account of the whole cycle in the late 15th century. The archetypal story sees Arthur's court given a vision of the Grail when they are gathered together for a feast, and all the knights vowing to go in quest of this mysterious symbol. After many setbacks and adventures on the way, Galahad achieves the quest and two other knights (usually Perceval and Bors) are granted a glimpse of the radiance from the Grail. But the quest leads to the end of the Round Table, since so many of the knights die, are lost, become hermits or remain in far lands. It has been suggested that one reason the Grail legends were so popular is because they presented a different, more daring and mysterious, facet of the Christian faith than the Church – itself then often worldly and corrupt – ever could.

But the modern interest in the theme can probably be traced mostly to Tennyson's Arthurian poems, especially his own *Morte d'Arthur*, *The Idylls of the King* and later *The Holy Grail and Other Poems* (1870). It is difficult today to really imagine the enormous popularity of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the Poet Laureate, but his narrative poem single-handedly revived the legend in the hearts and minds of Victorian readers. It's even been

said that most of the Cornish links to King Arthur derive from Tennyson, who chose Tintagel as the dramatic scene for some of his work.

The taste for Welsh, Irish, Breton and Gaelic folk-tales, and poems, songs and plays drawing on these, grew considerably in the late Eighteen Hundreds and this phase has become known as the 'Celtic Twilight'. Echoes of the Grail often found their way into the products of this movement. This found scholarly expression in one of the first studies to attempt to reclaim the origins of the Grail from its Norman chroniclers to the dreamers of the western shores of Britain. Alfred Nutt's *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, with its explanatory sub-title, "With Special Reference to the Hypothesis of Its Celtic Origin", was highly influential when it came out in 1888.

The Grail emerged again in literature when Professor Sebastian Evans had made a well-received translation of the medieval Parsifal stories under the title *The High History of the Holy Grail*. But in his subsequent study *In Quest of the Holy Grail* (1898), he put forward an ingenious theory that the legends were an allegory of political and courtly manoeuvrings between various European kings and barons of the day. While there were indeed some intriguing parallels, most authorities would regard this now as over-stretched, if not entirely far-fetched.

The first years of the new Edwardian era saw two remarkable stories come to light of real healing cups that some people acclaimed as the Grail, although in both cases that was never originally claimed. The first of these was the Nant Eos Cup, a worn wooden beaker kept at a remote country house near Aberystwyth. In the hands of one family for many generations, this Cup is in a time of hiding now, in a bank vault, and is seen by very few. Recently, journalist Byron Rogers made it the title theme of his essay collection, *The Bank Manager & The Holy Grail* (Aurum, 2003).

The second mysterious vessel from this time was the Glastonbury (or Bristol) Cup, a blue and silver glass dish found in the Chalice Well at Glastonbury in 1907 after a series of dreams and visions. It had been brought back from Italy some years before and its owner began to believe it had a sacred significance. The find created some newspaper controversy at the time.

Debate in academic and esoteric circles was also caused by a monumental study by a leading occult scholar, *The Hidden Church of the Holy Grail* by A.E. Waite, which came out in 1909. Waite advanced the tentative theory that the Grail had been secretly reverenced through the ages in many persecuted groups, such as the Cathars and the Knights Templar and others. This book has had a major and lasting influence on theories of the Grail ever since and may even be said to be the bedrock for the latest popular ideas on the theme. Few books now can resist the idea of a secret tradition, or that the Grail legends conceal something else.

One of the first 20th century fictional treatments of the Grail theme came from Evelyn Underhill, whose book *Mysticism* (1911) was later a great success. Her novel, *The Column of Dust*, published in 1909, sees an independent young woman, alone with her child – itself a daring theme for the day – encounter the Grail in a remote farmhouse in Westmorland. It's not certain why she placed the Grail there, but several families in this Northern county

had legends of "lucks" – precious cups that had to be safeguarded to preserve the fortunes of the house. They were never regarded as the Grail itself, but these tales may have given her the idea to set her story there.

The Column of Dust was dedicated to Arthur Machen and his wife Purefoy. A mentor of Underhill in her work on mysticism, and a great friend of Waite, Machen's imagination had been captured by the legends of the Grail and he studiedly them intensely in the British Museum around the turn of the century. The result was a set of essays, which were collected in his anthology *The Shining Pyramid* (1925), and a novel, *The Secret Glory*. The novel first came out, in part, in a short-lived journal during the First World War – when Machen's legend of The Angels of Mons was at its height – but had to wait until 1922 to see book form. Even then it omitted two final chapters, which were not finally issued until 1991.

The Secret Glory has often had a profound effect on people who read it. One notable example of this is John Betjeman, who said he "really owed Arthur Machen more than money can show", since the novel, lent to him by a Cornish priest, had "sent him Anglican when a Public School Evangelical aged 15". In Machen's book, his young hero runs away from his hateful public school to a bohemian life in London. But he also reverences the memory of a pilgrimage his father had taken him on to glimpse the Grail in a humble Welsh farmhouse, and so devotes his days to the quest for the meaning of the sacred cup.

Machen's essays in *The Shining Pyramid* put forward the idea that the legends of the Grail may draw on the lost Mass of the Celtic Church. He presented this too in a fine short novel, *The Great Return* (1915), in which the Grail returns to Wales on a ship of light which comes ashore in Pembrokeshire, and great healing and reconciliation follows.

But in 1920 a fresh new theory about the Grail was put forward in Jessie L Weston's highly influential *From Ritual to Romance*. Machen disliked it a lot and commented that no doubt we'd be told Galahad was really a cabbage next. This was because she proposed that the myths were remembrances of pagan ceremonies linked to the fertility of the land in primitive agricultural communities, and involving a sacrificial king. The book's theory at once gained a great deal of attention, even more so when it was used as the main inspiration for T S Eliot's ground-breaking Modernist poem, *The Waste Land*.

The bohemians who get hold of a sort of Grail in Mary Butts' art-deco, experimental novel, *Armed With Madness* (1928) must also have heard of Miss Weston's theory. They are a group of disillusioned young things gathered in a manor on the coast of Dorset. One of them fishes a jade cup out of a spring with a spear. They jokingly speculate it might be the Grail but one of them is scornful and dishonours the cup by using it as an ashtray. Personal and spiritual crises follow. Mary Butts, an associate of Cocteau, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and other leading literary figures, was learned in the legends and her book is a remarkable attempt to bring them up to date.

The next to invoke the Grail was Inkling Charles Williams, friend of Narnia's C S Lewis. Williams was a connoisseur and reviewer of detective fiction and was inspired to imitate it. But he brought his own interest in the things of the spirit to the field ands the result was seven unusual and pacy supernatural thrillers. The first of these, *War in Heaven* (1930), sees

a gentle Archdeacon in the quiet village of Fardles pitted against suave and sardonic villain Sir Giles Tumulty, who wants an old chalice in the clergyman's collection of church plate, as he is convinced it is the true Grail. Tumulty is an agent of evil, but in a satirical thriller written soon after, Sherard Vines' quirky *Return, Belphegor!* (1932), it is a demon in, as it were, person who sets up a Grail Company to stir up unrest and superstition in a moribund Britain. Later, a brisk detective thriller by Francis Gerard, *Secret Sceptre* (1937), placed the Grail back in Machen's remote Wales, guarded in turn by highly respectable senior figures in politics and the Church, who don't stop short of murder to keep their secret.

These titles were entertaining enough in their way. But it took a genius of the magnitude of John Cowper Powys to carefully and copiously explore the way the Grail might affect the lives of a whole community, when he wrote his massive evocation of its emergence in the Somerset town where some of the earliest legends may have grown: *A Glastonbury Romance* (1933). It is no misty romance but captures all of the tensions and uncertainties of its time, the depression-era Nineteen-Thirties, while still retaining the real resonances of the Grail myth and opening them up into Powys' own cosmic speculations.

Another notable literary treatment of the theme came in Philip Toynbee's post-War experimental novel *Tea with Mrs Goodman* (1947), told from numerous fragmented perspectives. It was highly regarded in its day but somewhat overlooked now and probably deserves more attention. It looks like a title to pick up while copies can still be found very reasonably.

In non-fiction studies, American scholar Roger Sherman Loomis distilled a lifetime's fascination to provide one of the clearest, most careful and comprehensive overviews of the legend in his 1963 work *The Grail – from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol*, reprinted many times since.

One other novel fictional treatment that has its own quiet magic is the only novel by Arthurian expert Geoffrey Ashe, *The Finger & the Moon* (1973). It portrays a wonderful revival of the Grail ritual in a hippy-era Glastonbury setting, with hints of mind-altering psychedelic substances, Vietnam protests and alternative living.

Perhaps drawing somewhat on the same Sixties spirit, John Matthews has produced a range of books suggesting we can use the Grail legends to explore our own consciousness and creative imagination. Well-grounded in the Celtic sources, these have proved ideal guides for the Grail seeker of the New Age.

But it was Henry Lincoln, Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh's *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* in 1982, preceded by Henry Lincoln's BBC programme exploring the mystery, that really raised the Grail high again in the public mind. It soon became a major success and generated a whole industry of research, speculation and attempted rebuttal. The book asks how a humble nineteenth-century French priest, in an obscure village, Rennes-le-Château, in the Pyrenees was apparently able to acquire great wealth. But this is no simple treasure hunt. To answer the question, the authors are led to a mysterious painting by landscape artist Poussin, to the geometry of the region where the priest lived, and to a mysterious order known as the Priory of Sion. With secret, coded documents, the Knights

Templar, the Cathar heretics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and a list of Grand Masters that includes many famous names, the book is a heady mix indeed. But the most dramatic revelation was that Jesus may have been married to Mary Magdalene, and that they may have established a dynasty, the bloodline of Christ.

Ten years later, Andrew Sinclair's *The Sword and the Grail* (1993) was one of the first to make the link to Rosslyn Chapel, shrine of the Scottish Knights Templar, where (as a descendant of the St Clair family who guarded the place) he discovered a Grail marking on an old tombstone. Once little-known, the Chapel is now of the most-visited ancient sites in Scotland.

The Grail easily lends itself to variations on almost any form of fiction. So the avid reader can enjoy seeing it in a Lovejoy crime caper (Jonathan Gash's *The Grail Tree*, 1970), a comic fantasy (Tom Holt's *Grailblazers*, 1994), a historical whodunit (Michael Clynes' *The Grail Murders*, 1993), a supernatural thriller (Phil Rickman's *The Chalice*, 1997) and as part of an eminent literary sequence (Anthony Powell's *The Fisher King*, 1985).

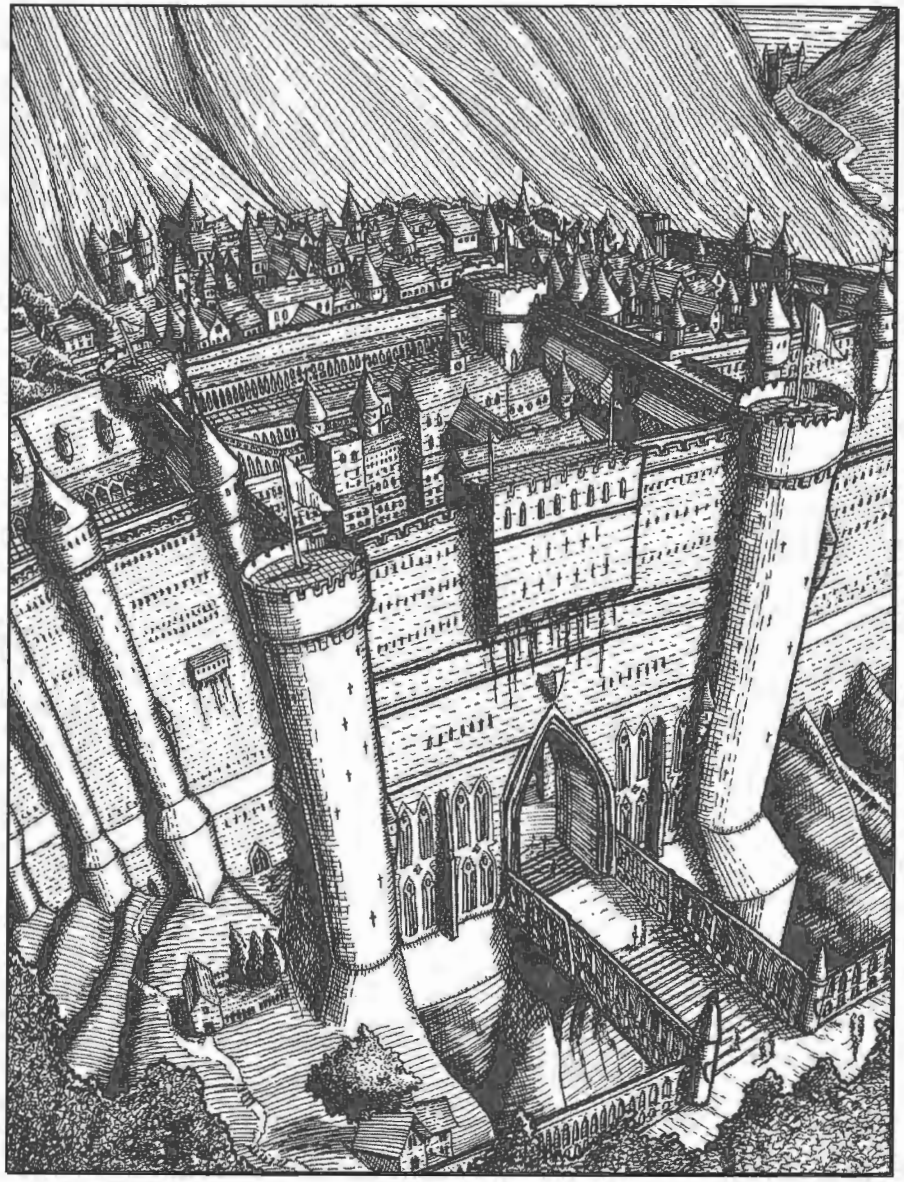
Richard Monaco (the Parsifal saga), Stephen Lawhead (The Pendragon Cycle), Bernard Cornwell (The Grail Quest) and Robert Holdstock (The Merlin Codex) are amongst many fantasy writers who have written book sequences based on the legends, but as they deal with the whole of the Arthurian mythos – a much wider subject – I haven't attempted to include them here.

Where will writers on the Grail go next? Will the present cult survive beyond the influence of Dan Brown's bestselling book? The sacred cup has proved to be a phenomenally enduring symbol which can survive both fame and neglect. We won't have seen the last of the theories about the Grail or the stories that draw on its many rich meanings. ☙

A Brief Perspective of the Last Twenty Years

I first discovered the *Pendragon* journal whilst browsing in Watkins's esoteric bookshop off Leicester Square in London one Saturday morning in the late 1970s. It was a slim, home-produced version at that time, before the age of home computers and cut-price printing, but it fired my interest immediately and sparked what became a thirty-year association with *Pendragon*, the Society and with Arthurian affairs. I can remember that my letter expressing interest in the Society's activities and my wish to subscribe to the journal was answered in her own handwriting by Jess Foster with warmth and cordiality.

In 1979 we learned of Jess's death, after twenty years of leading the Society she had founded. A ten-year interregnum followed when Jess's daughter, Kate Pollard, acted as secretary and, with Chris Lovegrove as editor, kept the journal alive. But the journal was appearing irregularly and it was no surprise when Kate announced that the Society was in financial trouble and she was not able to keep things going on her own any longer. Her 'howl for help' was followed by private negotiations with Eddie Tooke and we were invited by Eddie and Anne in 1989 to a weekend meeting at their home at Tewksbury to consider what might be done. From this meeting I returned home bewildered to find I had been elected Chairman and was facing a steep learning curve.



Ian Brown featured a fairytale building for the King of the Castle for XXXVI No 1 (Autumn 2008), an issue which also included items on Arthurian opera and film

Eddie and Anne produced sixteen journals of 28 pages during the next four years and their careful husbanding of our funds and a steady recruitment drive, together with regular AGMs, built the society back to around 200 members again. Pendragon owes them much.

After Eddie's retirement due to ill health I edited the magazine and ran all Society affairs with Marilyn's help for five years until I also suffered some health problems. Charles Evans-Günther guest-edited for a year before Chris emerged to edit the journal again in 1997 and, with Simon and Anne Rouse, we formed our last production team.

From that time over the last ten years we have seen the journal move forward in leaps and bounds under Chris's scholarly and expert guidance and we were able to organise Round Tables and to put up a website for two years. But, in spite of this success, our numbers fell away to the point that such committed efforts from our team could not be sustained any longer; the world had changed, Arthur was manifest everywhere for free and we had our own family lives to lead. I think it fair to say that our quest was fulfilled honourably and it was time to put the sword back in the stone – which we did at our final Round Table at Caerleon in 2009 in the company of many of our most supportive members and friends. ☙

Fred Stedman-Jones, Chairman

This page and overleaf: recent cover designs, including three by Simon Rouse


PENDRAGON


Sir Gawaine the Son of
Lot, King of Orkney:

The Pendragon Society celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 2009. This anthology contains a selection of articles from its Journal between 1965 and 2009

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